

The DAY of the LORD



**AMAZING FACTS ABOUT THE
RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST!**





LOOKING FOR THE BLESSED HOPE AND GLORIOUS APPEARING OF OUR GREAT GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST (TITUS 2:13).

NOTHING IN THE HISTORY OF HUMANITY COULD COMPARE TO THE COLOSSAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST.

After all, it marks the end of the world as we know it.

The return of Jesus is the climactic conclusion of our age. It will be the culmination of all things, the definitive V-Day experience, the final crescendo. Yet while it is the end of everything as we know it, it is also the beginning of something so radically new that our minds cannot fully grasp it now.

The Bible predicts that at the second coming, all things will come to a screeching halt, but that God's people will cross a threshold marking the entrance to eternity. The second coming will happen in concert with the resurrection of the saved dead who, along with the saved living, will ascend to heaven—and the death of all the wicked still living on the earth. Thus, this event is so much more than just another note on an appointment calendar. It's the ultimate game-changing event!

Strangely, even though the second coming of Jesus is mentioned more than 300 times in Scripture, many churches scarcely address the subject, and those that do often present it as a collection of disconnected puzzle pieces—scattered and nonsensical. Sadly, the vast majority of humanity knows little or nothing of history's main event.

Christ gave us many signs indicating how to discern the nearness of His return, yet many are missing these clear indicators.

Even many professed Christians are asleep at the wheel, living their lives as if this ultimate climactic moment will never happen. Yet Jesus emphatically promised that He will return. And just as the predictions of His first coming were precisely fulfilled, the signs of His second coming are rapidly being realized

in our day. This is no time to be confused. The question we most need to face is not, "Will He come?" Rather, we must be asking, "What are the signs of His return?" "How will it happen?" "Am I truly ready?"

To answer these questions is the purpose of this magazine—and to not only provide you with facts from Scripture about the second coming of Christ, but to show how you can prepare for the most important event of your life. In truth, everyone is just a heartbeat away from experiencing the second coming, for when we die, our next conscious

moment will bring us face to face with the Creator, who will be surrounded by indescribable power and glory.

So let's prepare to meet our God!



The Second Coming

DEFINITION:

The ultimate hope of humanity and the culmination of the gospel will be when Jesus literally, personally, and visibly returns to the earth. It is also referred to as the second advent, the Day of the Lord, the Parousia, and the return of Christ. Prophetic fulfillments and world events indicate that it is imminent. While we do not know its exact timing, we are commanded to always watch and be ready.

EVEN THOUGH THE BIBLE ENDS WITH THE PRAYER, "COME, LORD JESUS" (REVELATION 22:20), FEW BIBLE TEACHERS GIVE THE SECOND COMING MUCH ATTENTION TODAY.

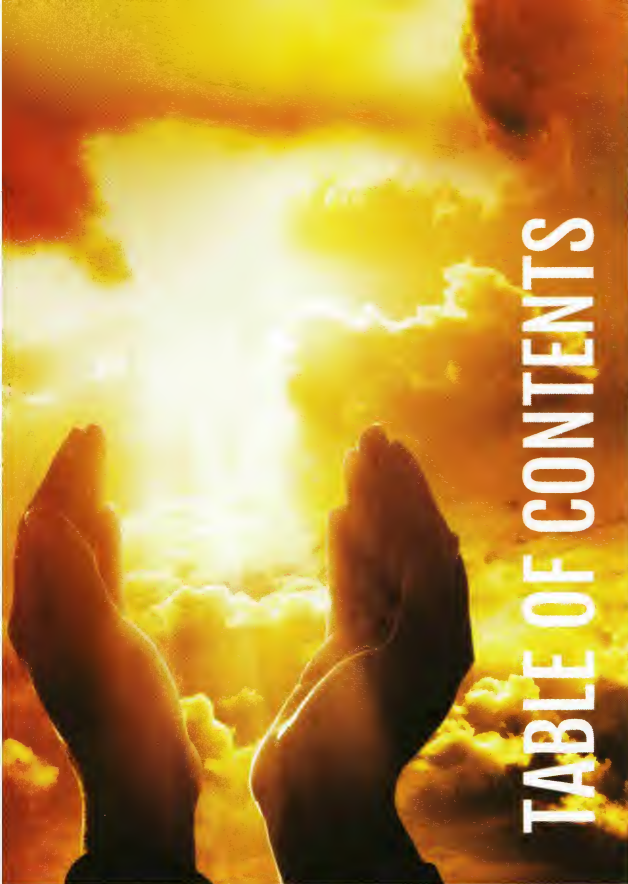


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Amazing Facts About the Return of Jesus Christ!

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Harbingers of Destruction

NEARLY 2,000 YEARS AGO, THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL EMPIRE WAS SHAKEN TO ITS CORE. ON THAT APOCALYPTIC DAY IN AD 79, ONE OF THE WORST NATURAL DISASTERS TO STRIKE THE ANCIENT WORLD FELL UPON THE ROMAN COASTAL CITY OF POMPEII. IN LESS THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, THE SCANDALOUS RESORT TOWN AND ITS PEOPLE WERE WIPED FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

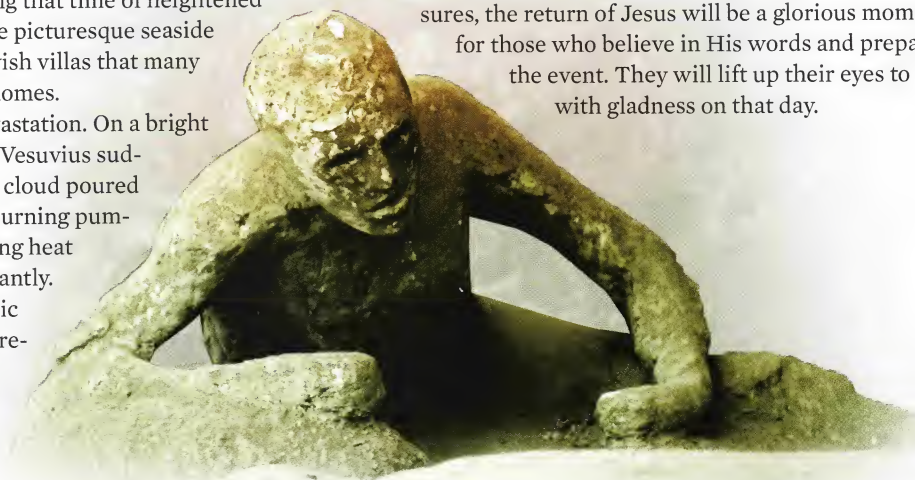
The people who lived in Pompeii in the shadow of the massive volcano had become accustomed to the tremors that should have been a stark warning to them of impending destruction. Seventeen years earlier, an earthquake shattered much of the city and thousands moved away during that time of heightened anxiety. But after a period of calm, the picturesque seaside town was rebuilt and refilled with lavish villas that many Roman citizens enjoyed as vacation homes.

Then came the ultimate day of devastation. On a bright and otherwise calm morning, Mount Vesuvius suddenly and violently erupted; a deadly cloud poured down millions of tons of pulverized burning pumice and molten rock. The overpowering heat incinerated thousands of victims instantly. Others were overwhelmed by the toxic gases that encased them in hot ash, preserving their writhing forms beneath twenty feet of volcanic dust.

For more than 1,500 years, the ruins lay untouched and forgotten till workers accidentally unearthed the edges of the doomed city. Slowly, archaeologists discovered clues that revealed the rampant immorality within the city. Evidence of mass vice and greed were found. Murals on the walls indicated Pompeii rivaled ancient Sodom in its practice of vice and hedonism. Victims lay frozen in time, some still clinging to precious jewels and coins, silent witnesses to what they treasured most.

The people of Pompeii had received many early warning signs of impending disaster, but they chose to ignore them and perished. In the same way, we see multiple signs of the coming apocalyptic day when Christ will return. The Bible forecasts there will be sudden destruction on a worldwide scale.

While many will fall as victims to the universal destruction, their fingers vainly gripping earthly treasures, the return of Jesus will be a glorious moment for those who believe in His words and prepare for the event. They will lift up their eyes to Him with gladness on that day.



THE DAY OF THE LORD

When a massive tsunami was about to slam into the north-east coast of Japan in 2011, residents were given a last-minute warning to seek higher ground. Newscasters flashed bulletins of a coming mega-wave. Police officers with bullhorns shouted to curious onlookers to run for their lives. Those who shrugged off the alerts were caught in the unprecedented destruction.

The Bible warns of a time coming when the earth will be overcome with disaster. This calamity will not be localized. Every corner of the planet will be struck by the catastrophic shockwave that will shake the foundations of the globe. No early warning system can predict the exact time of this event; it will come with a sudden force that will be a surprise to virtually all. The apostle Paul wrote:

“Concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape” (1 Thessalonians 5:1–3).

Are we left completely in the dark about this future day of the Lord? Not at all. Indeed, the Bible has much to say about the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. Scripture brims with forewarnings of this coming great and dreadful day. Signs of the times are carefully provided in several key chapters in God’s Word. For those who ignore the signals of coming doom, the day of the Lord will strike as a thief in the night. But for others who study and prepare their lives for the return of Jesus, it is called “the blessed hope” (Titus 2:13).

WATCH AND BE READY

The final events on earth need not be a mystery to you. The Lord will not come as a thief for those who watch and are ready:

“You, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober” (1 Thessalonians 5:4–6).

“When it is evening you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’; and in the morning, ‘It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.’... You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times” (Matthew 16:2, 3).


These passages are not suggesting we spend sleepless nights wringing our hands while anxiously waiting for a looming tragedy to strike. Preparing for Christ’s coming is not about installing an early warning system in your home to alert you of impending doom. It’s about studying the signs given in the Bible to know that His coming is near.

Even more important, it’s about developing a loving, obedient relationship with your Savior to prepare for this crisis. Readiness is primarily a matter of the heart.


Much like the Japanese tsunami and the destruction of Pompeii, the worldwide flood in Noah’s day came with suddenness to those who were not prepared. Jesus described what happened back then as a foretaste of what will come:

“Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:36–39).

Are you watching? Are you ready? Or will you be swept away unexpectedly?



**ARE YOU WATCHING?
ARE YOU READY?
OR WILL YOU BE SWEEPED
AWAY UNEXPECTEDLY?**

A dramatic illustration of a massive tsunami wave crashing over a city. The wave is a towering wall of greenish-grey water with white foam, moving from the top left towards the bottom right. In the foreground, at the base of the wave, is a city with several multi-story buildings, some with red roofs and others with blue roofs. The sky is a bright, hazy yellow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall tone is one of impending doom and divine judgment.

"GET OUT OF THERE NOW!"

WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT?

This magazine will introduce you to the subject of the second coming of Christ, providing an overview of the Bible's teachings on this subject, describing the certainty of His arrival, the signs, and the manner in which He will come back, and how to prepare for this event.

It will also challenge common misconceptions about His return. Jesus warned us there would be deceptions and false prophets to try to confuse us about His appearing. Most of all, He urgently warned you to prepare for that day and explained how to be ready to receive Him in peace.

While Ayumi Osuga played with her three small children in their home on the afternoon of March 11, 2011, she heard her husband outside shout, "Get out of there now!" She quickly grabbed her kids and ran out to her husband. They left everything behind as they jumped into their car and sped away to a nearby hilltop, where they escaped the devastating tsunami. When she returned home she discovered that many of their neighbors did not heed the same warnings. They lingered and perished. Though she and her family lost all their worldly goods, she said, "I have come to realize what is important in life."

This is why angels told Lot and his family to not even look back when fleeing the destruction of Sodom. Lot's wife did not take the warning seriously; she perished as a result. And this is why Jesus soberly warned, "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32).


The soon return of Jesus is not just about escaping destruction. It's more than avoiding impending catastrophe from a volcano or flood. Christ's coming is about the end of evil, suffering, injustice, and the horrors of a broken world. The second coming will be a grand reunion filled with joy for those who are prepared. All things will be made new. Evil will be forever destroyed.

Before that day comes, you should ask yourself, "What is really important in my life?"

DAY *of the* LORD

DEFINITION:

An Old Testament phrase often speaking of a day when God would directly interfere in human affairs and deliver the faithful in Israel. It came to refer to the great final day when time will stand still as God subdues the nations of the earth and rescues His people at Christ's second coming.



TAKE HEED TO YOURSELVES, LEST YOUR HEARTS
BE WEIGHED DOWN WITH CAROUSING, DRUNKENNESS,
AND CARES OF THIS LIFE, AND THAT DAY COME ON
YOU UNEXPECTEDLY.

FOR IT WILL COME AS A SNARE ON ALL THOSE WHO
DWELL ON THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH.

WATCH THEREFORE, AND PRAY ALWAYS THAT YOU MAY
BE COUNTED WORTHY TO ESCAPE ALL THESE THINGS
THAT WILL COME TO PASS, AND TO STAND BEFORE THE
SON OF MAN.

—LUKE 21:34–36



The Certainty of the Second Coming

CAPTAIN SCOTT O'GRADY'S FIGHTER JET SPIRALED TOWARD THE EARTH AFTER IT WAS HIT BY A MISSILE OVER WAR-TORN BOSNIA. HE PULLED THE EJECTION LEVER OF HIS F-16 AND PARACHUTED INTO ENEMY TERRITORY, BEGINNING A FRIGHTENING ODYSSEY. FOR SIX DAYS HE SURVIVED BY EATING BUGS AND DRINKING RAINWATER. HE AVOIDED CAPTURE BY HIDING UNDER BUSHES AND COVERING HIS FACE WITH MUD TO MAKE HIMSELF LESS VISIBLE. SOMETIMES ENEMY SOLDIERS SEARCHING FOR HIM PASSED WITHIN ONLY A FEW FEET OF HIS HIDING PLACE.

O'Grady wondered, *Do they know I'm alive? Do they care? Are they going to come for me?* What he didn't know was that from the moment his ordeal began, the U.S. military was mobilizing a massive, multi-million dollar effort for his rescue. At one point, his country had forty airplanes in the air searching just for him. Still O'Grady kept wondering, *Will they come for me?*

Captain O'Grady was eventually recovered in a daring rescue using several branches of the military—all to save just one soldier stranded behind enemy lines.

We are likewise stranded in enemy territory, and some are wondering whether God has forgotten us. Absolutely not! Christ has not forgotten His people. He promised, "He will send His angels with a great sound of a trum-

pet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:31).

God is making preparations even now to rescue all of His children. He's coming back ... and soon! But how can we be so certain?



In a sweeping, comprehensive review of world history, a prophecy found in the Bible book of Daniel, chapter two, revealed the rise and fall of nations in advance—all culminating with the second coming. More than 2,600 years ago, an ancient Babylonian king who had conquered the nation of Israel had a mysterious, confusing dream. When his wise men and astrol-ogers couldn't decipher his nighttime vision, a Hebrew captive stepped forward and, through God's help, unraveled the king's dream, which provided a stunning overview of time down to the end of the world.

King Nebuchadnezzar listened in awe as the Jewish hostage, named Daniel, unfolded the dream of a multi-mineral statue of a man. The young prophet was given insight by God to explain the meaning of the vision:

"You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay" (Daniel 2:31–33).

Daniel then revealed that the head of gold on the statue represented Babylon, which reigned from 605 BC to 539 BC. History next confirms that the chest and arms of silver symbolized the Medo-Persian Empire, which overran Babylon and reigned from 539 BC to 331 BC. The belly and thighs of brass stood for Greece. Alexander the Great conquered the Persians, paving the way for Greek rule from 331 BC to 168 BC. Next, the legs of iron symbolized the iron monarchy of Rome, which conquered the Greeks in 168 BC and dominated the world until AD 476.

When the Roman Empire began to crumble, it was not overtaken by another world power. Rather, the statue's feet of iron mixed with clay represented the successive hordes of Germanic invaders who divided the territory into what is now modern-day Europe. Though many rulers have tried to unite Europe, including Charlemagne, Napoleon, and even Adolf Hitler, none has been successful.

How did Nebuchadnezzar's dream end?

"You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:34, 35, emphasis added).

Who is the stone "cut out without hands" that demolished the image with enormous force?

It is Jesus Christ, the "Rock of Ages" (Isaiah 26:4, margin). All of history moves toward the spectacular finale when the Son of God returns to the earth with power. History textbooks confirm that we are living in the toes of this grand, symbolic figure. Kingdoms have risen and fallen just as God predicted through Daniel.

The last scene in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is the coming of God's kingdom. Biblical prophecy has proven itself trustworthy, so we can know with certainty that we are living in the end times. Jesus will soon return!

THE BIBLE ACCURATELY RECORDED HISTORY IN ADVANCE SINCE THE TIME OF BABYLON—PROPHECY AFFIRMED BY ANY HISTORY BOOK. WE CAN TRUST IT WILL ALSO BE RIGHT ABOUT THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS!

THE PROPHETIC STATUE OF DANIEL 2, REPRESENTING VARIOUS KINGDOMS OF THE EARTH THROUGHOUT HISTORY

- **BABYLON**
605–539 BC
- **MEDO-PERSIA**
539–331 BC
- **GREECE**
331–168 BC
- **ROME**
168 BC–AD 476
- **EUROPE DIVIDED**
AD 476–PRESENT

Daniel



"I WILL COME AGAIN."

Not only do fulfilled prophecies reinforce the certainty of the second coming, but Jesus Himself made ironclad statements about His return. These are no mere hints. The straightforward words spoken to His disciples remove all doubt:

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

With stunning precision, Jesus also foretold the signs of His coming, the exact manner of His return, and what happens just before the end of the age. Large sections of the Gospels portray the final events of earth's history that culminate in the second advent. Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 17 and 21 outline the signs of the times. Jesus also told many

parables to encourage people to watch and be ready for His return, such as the parable of the faithful and evil servants, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the parable of the talents, and the parable of the sheep and goats.

Even as Jesus ascended to heaven, angels appeared and assured His disciples, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

THE FIRST COMING GUARANTEES THE SECOND COMING

Jesus' first advent to earth, to Bethlehem more than 2,000

years ago, is closely connected to His second advent. The Messiah didn't leave heaven and come to earth just to impress a group of shepherds. Christ's purpose was to conquer sin and death. "Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it" (Colossians

2:15). If Jesus had not won a decisive victory over the devil, why would we have any reason to think He would come again to squash, once and for all, Satan's dominion over this planet and to make all things new?

The Lord has not left our world to spin into oblivion. Heaven is deeply committed to ending the great battle between good and evil and to restore Eden on earth. Jesus will return to end all suffering, offer true justice, and crush the serpent who has ravaged

PARABLES OF THE SECOND COMING

THE FAITHFUL AND EVIL SERVANTS

MATTHEW 24:45-51

THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

MATTHEW 25:1-13

THE TALENTS

MATTHEW 25:14-30

THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

MATTHEW 25:31-46



the human race since the fall of Adam and Eve. “Now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ... Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Hebrews 9:26, 28).

A REPEATED BIBLE THEME

Did you know the Bible contains around 1,800 prophecies? And for every Old Testament prophecy that speaks about the first coming of Jesus, eight predict His second coming! References to the coming of Christ occur hundreds of times in the Bible. Even the last words of the Bible affirm His soon return. Jesus said, “Surely I am coming quickly,” to which the apostle John replied, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20).

The apostle Peter told us that the second coming has been prophesied from the beginning:

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19–21, emphasis added).

Enoch, who lived only seven generations after Adam, prophesied of Christ’s return: “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints” (Jude 1:14). A thousand years before Jesus was born, King David told of the Lord’s coming to gather His people: “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all

around Him” (Psalm 50:3).

The apostle Paul preached to the pagans that God “has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). The writer of Hebrews admonished believers in “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

The book of James affirms:

“Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!” (5:7–9).

And John wrote a letter to inspire believers by stating, “Now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (1 John 2:28). He later began the Apocalypse with these words: “Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come” (Revelation 1:4, emphasis added). Indeed, this entire prophetic book points to the theme of the second coming. “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work” (22:12).

Seeing then that so much of the Bible is dedicated to the theme of the second coming of Christ, we should spend more time studying this sacred subject.

Eschatology

DEFINITION:

*The study of the final events of earth’s history and the ultimate destiny of humanity. The word derives from two Greek words: **eschatos** meaning “last” and **-logy** meaning “the study of.”*

BE DILIGENT TO PRESENT
YOURSELF APPROVED TO GOD, A
WORKER WHO DOES NOT NEED TO
BE ASHAMED, RIGHTLY DIVIDING
THE WORD OF TRUTH.

2 TIMOTHY 2:15

Signs of Jesus' Coming

THEY JUST WOULDN'T LISTEN. SOME OF THEM EVEN THOUGHT IT WAS A JOKE. AT A BOARDING SCHOOL IN THE NORTHERN THAILAND PROVINCE OF CHIANG RAI, YOUNG ELEMENTARY STUDENTS WERE ASLEEP ONE SUNDAY EVENING AS A DEADLY DANGER CREPT UPON THEM. INVESTIGATORS BELIEVE A FAULTY FLUORESCENT LIGHT BROKE AND SPARKED A FIRE. FLAMES SPREAD QUICKLY, BUT NOT SO FAST THAT SOME OF THE STUDENTS—AS YOUNG AS FIVE YEARS OLD—COULDN'T BE ROUSED AND WARNED ABOUT THE DANGER.

The *Bangkok Post* newspaper reported, "Suchada Kong-arsa, an 11-year-old school girl who survived the tragedy ... rushed back to wake up her friends and tell them to escape. 'Most of them did not believe me and went back to sleep but others did and struggled to escape,' she said."

At least seventeen young students died in the fire.

It's a tragedy, to be sure. But even at the last second, a warning was sounded, yet some wouldn't, or couldn't, listen. They had been in that dormitory for weeks, perhaps months. Every night they went to sleep, and perhaps on more than one occasion, pranksters tried to rouse them. The signs around them—frantic pleading, perhaps even the faint scent of smoke—just didn't register.

Can such a tragedy be repeated, and exponentially magnified, as the world nears its final hours? The Bible says millions will ignore the signs of the times and pay a similarly fateful price.

**CAN SUCH A TRAGEDY BE REPEATED, AND EXPONENTIALLY
MAGNIFIED, AS THE WORLD NEARS ITS FINAL HOURS?**

**KNOW THIS, THAT IN THE LAST DAYS
PERILOUS TIMES WILL COME.
(2 TIMOTHY 3:1)**



If you've been around Bible prophecy for any length of time, and even if you haven't, you're aware that many people have set dates for Christ's return. Some repeatedly predicted specific days for this momentous event—and every last one of them has been wrong. (If you're reading this, it's a safe assumption that Jesus has not yet returned.)

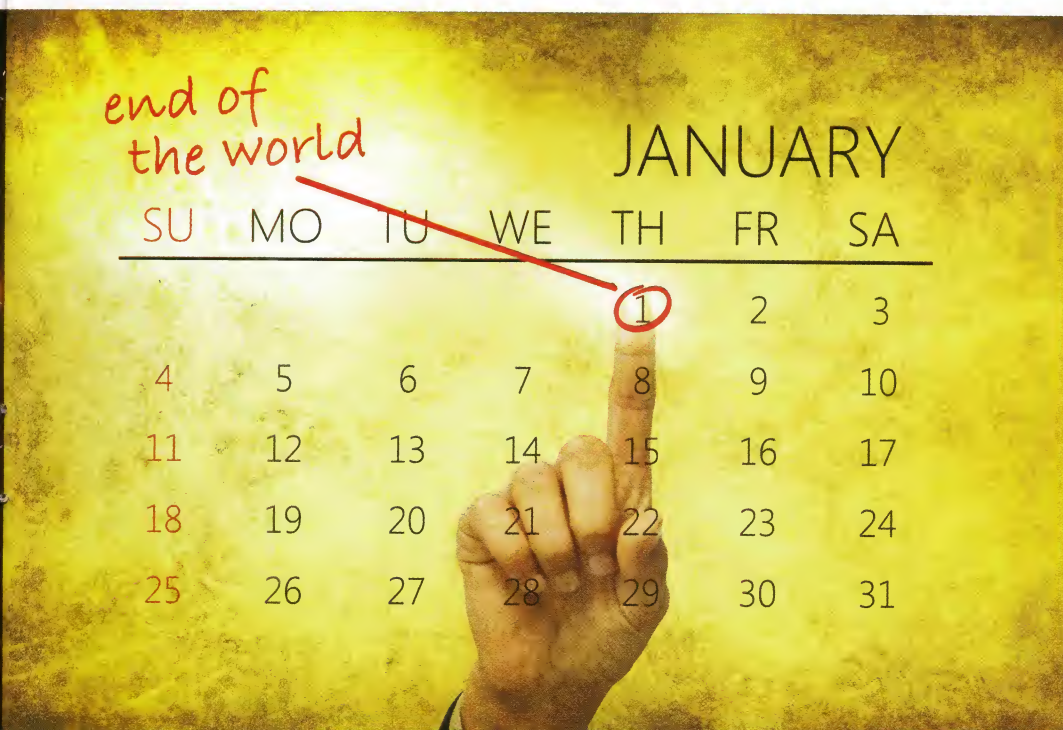
In 2011, an estimated \$5 million was spent by followers of Harold Camping, an evangelical radio broadcaster, to advertise

the predicted "secret rapture" of the church and the end of the world. Neither event happened, and Camping became the object of ridicule for late night television comedians. His legion of followers and his radio network dwindled, and Camping died two years later. (See page 14 for other failed predictions through history.)

And yet, as was seen with other prophetic failures, this error likely led a significant number of people to doubt the Christian faith and scoff at the idea of a soon second coming.


But even Harold Camping—and the many others who've set dates—knew one true thing: Jesus really is coming again! They may have forgotten Jesus' plain words, "of that day and hour no one knows" (Matthew 24:36), but they remembered His promise: "I will come again and receive you to Myself" (John 14:3).

This magazine will not set dates. But the same Jesus who said no one knows the exact time of His return also declared that we *can* discern the nearness of His return: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees," Jesus urged. "When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, *know* that the kingdom of God is near" (Luke 21:29–31, emphasis added).

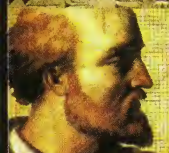


A 2010 PEW RESEARCH CENTER SURVEY REVEALED THAT 50 PERCENT OF AMERICAN PROTESTANTS BELIEVE THE RETURN OF CHRIST WOULD OCCUR WITHIN THE NEXT 40 YEARS. EVEN THOUGH THE BIBLE SAYS WE DO NOT KNOW THE DAY OR HOUR OF CHRIST'S RETURN (MATTHEW 24:36), PEOPLE HAVE FOR CENTURIES BEEN TEMPTED TO MAKE SUCH PREDICTIONS ANYWAY.


FAILED PREDICTIONS THROUGH HISTORY




2800 BC Assyrian clay tablet reads, "Our earth is degenerate in these latter days. There are signs that the world is speedily coming to an end."



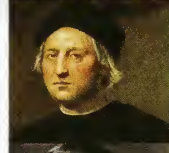
AD 1000 Pope Sylvester II predicts the world will end on January 1, 1000.



1033 Widespread belief that the 1,000th anniversary of Christ's death would mark His return.




1284 Pope Innocent III predicts the world would end 666 years after the rise of Islam.




1658 Columbus claims the world was created in 5343 BC and would last 7,000 years.



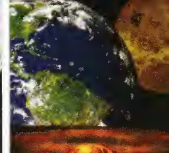
1844 Baptist preacher William Miller predicts the return of Jesus sometime on October 22.




1914 Charles Taze Russell predicts the great day of the Lord would occur in October.




1936 Herbert W. Armstrong predicts the rapture would take place this year.




1962 Jeane Dixon predicts a planetary alignment would bring destruction to the world.




1967 Cult leader Jim Jones claims that nuclear holocaust would take place this year.




1981 Chuck Smith, Calvary Chapel, predicts the world would end this year.




1982 Pat Robertson predicts the world would end in October or November.




1994 Harold Camping claims the rapture would come in September or October.




1999 A prediction attributed to Nostradamus states the "king of terror" would come.




2000 Many believe that the Y2K computer bug would cause major catastrophes leading to the end of the world as we know it.




2007 Pat Robertson again predicts the destruction of the earth, this time on April 27.



2011 Harold Camping again claims the rapture would occur on May 21 and that the end of the world would occur on October 21.



2012 Some claim a Mayan calendar predicts the end of the age on December 21.



2014/2015 John Hagee and Mark Blitz claim that four "blood moons" point to the second coming of Christ.

SADLY, THESE PROPHECIES ERODED FAITH IN THE BIBLE WHEN THEY FAILED TO MATERIALIZE.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES?

If Jesus told His closest followers they could tell when His return is near, did He offer some concrete indicators—signs of the times? Yes! He certainly did:

“Take heed that no one deceives you. ... You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. ... Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places”

(Matthew 24:4, 6, 7).

Not every earthquake, famine, or war is a specific sign of His soon return. We’ve seen these tragedies repeat on a regular basis during the 2,000 years since Christ walked the earth. However, from Jesus’ words, we can expect to see a dramatic increase in the frequency and intensity of these calamities just before He comes back.

Let’s look at some of these signs in detail ...

WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS

It’s difficult to switch on the television and not hear news about war and other conflict somewhere in the world. While the last century was perhaps one of the world’s bloodiest, with upwards of 100 million people killed, this new millennium isn’t off to a much better start. Of course, conflict continues to plague these regions.

1. The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States spawned a military invasion of Afghanistan. Eighteen months after 9/11, troops invaded Iraq. Each war lasted years—eight in Iraq, thirteen in Afghanistan—and each conflict left behind fractured regions in its wake, not to mention thousands upon thousands of deaths and injuries.
2. Africa’s sub-Sahara region has seen continued war since the independence movements of the 1950s and 1960s.

“Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places” (Matthew 24:7).



MORE THAN 1,000 SEPARATE TERRORIST INCIDENTS OCCURRED IN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 2016.

In the past thirty years, blood-stained conflicts in the Sudan, Ethiopia, Liberia, Somalia, and Sierra Leone—to name but a few—have left their mark. In Rwanda, horrific inter-tribal war between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes killed tens of thousands. In many places, sub-Saharan Africa remains a powder keg, capable of igniting at any moment.

3. The Middle East, including Egypt, Libya, and Morocco, has been bathed in war for years. The “Arab Spring” of 2011 toppled established governments in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia and led to a massive civil war in Syria, as well as Yemen. Iraq remains in turmoil with civil war. Iran’s nuclear ambitions are of great concern in the region, worrying not only Israel—a nation its leaders have pledged to destroy—but also neighboring Saudi Arabia, a country with the means to field an invading army if needed.
4. South Asia: Periodic clashes flare up between India and Pakistan, both nuclear powers; in Pakistan’s northwest regions, fighting with Taliban invaders continues. There are also continued clashes between South Korea and the nuclear-armed North Korea.
5. Other contentious hotspots include Europe and the ongoing conflict in the Ukraine, where part of that nation was swallowed up by troops from the Russian Federation.



AT THE START OF 2016, MORE THAN 14 WARS IN WHICH MORE THAN 1,000 PEOPLE WERE KILLED OVER THE PAST YEAR WERE BEING WAGED AROUND THE WORLD.

Nations surely are “rising against nations,” as this list of wars and conflicts demonstrates. Another threat comes from non-nations, such as the so-called “Islamic State.” This group has committed and encouraged terrorist attacks in Europe and the United States, declaring that it is rising to destroy the West in a holy war to end all wars.

The current dramatic escalation in “wars and rumors of war” isn’t fantasy—it’s reality. According to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, an estimated “1.5 billion people live in regions haunted by violent conflicts, whose damage to the global economy is valued at 14.3 trillion U.S. dollars per year.” The same report indicated “over 30 million children are homeless because of wars, natural disasters, and other crises,” the highest number since the end of World War II.

“KNOW THIS, THAT IN THE LAST DAYS PERILOUS TIMES WILL COME: FOR MEN WILL BE LOVERS OF THEMSELVES, LOVERS OF MONEY, BOASTERS, PROUD, BLASPHEMERS, DISOBEDIENT TO PARENTS” (2 TIMOTHY 3:2).

THE PLUMMETING DISREGARD FOR PARENTAL AUTHORITY AND RESPECT FOR ELDERS IS ANOTHER EVIDENCE WE ARE LIVING IN THE TIME OF THE END.



FAMINES

In the wake of war, famine generally follows. The millions of refugees from Iraq and Syria, for example, are often found undernourished in refugee camps or on their treks to Europe and other nations. The United Nations World Food Program says “some 795 million people in the world do not have enough food. ... That’s about one in nine people on earth.” A sudden disruption in food supplies could quickly turn that into a massive famine.

DISEASE AND PESTILENCE

“Let me give you a stern warning. What we are seeing now looks more and more like a dramatic resurgence of the threat from emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases. The world is not prepared to cope,” Dr. Margaret Chan, a physician who



842 MILLION PEOPLE WERE SUFFERING FROM MALNUTRITION BY THE END OF 2014.

heads the World Health Organization, has declared.

Headlines in 2016 on the rapid spread of the Zika virus speak to this threat. This virus can cause debilitating birth defects and is believed to be carried by certain species of mosquitos; it caused widespread panic during the Summer Olympics.

For most of 2014, international headlines centered on an outbreak of the Ebola virus in West Africa. It quickly killed more than 11,000. People carrying the virus showed up in nations far from the outbreak zones, sending waves of panic throughout the world.

The influenza crisis of 1918 killed 25 million people in one year. Other fast-spreading diseases have brought tragic consequences, as with the ongoing AIDS epidemic that began in the 1980s.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Michael Snyder, in his highly regarded “Economic Collapse” blog, noted in 2016 that the earth’s crust is becoming “increasingly unstable,” with forty active volcanoes erupting at the time and more than 3,000 earthquakes in one month’s time. He wrote, “The entire west coast of the United States lies along the [seismic zone known as the] Ring of Fire, and virtually every other

section of the Ring of Fire is roaring to life.”

An earthquake or a massive volcanic eruption can wreak havoc in minutes. Residents of the San Francisco Bay Area were stunned in 1989 when an earthquake hit one October evening, killing 67, collapsing a major bridge, and causing billions of dollars in damage.

Six years later, the Osaka-Kobe area of Japan was rocked by a magnitude 6.9 earthquake that killed thousands. And in 2011, the Fukushima earthquake in northern Japan led to a nuclear accident that spread deadly radiation and resulted in 1,000 deaths.

These earthquakes are increasing in frequency and, some observers note, in intensity. And as was seen in Fukushima, the damage from an earthquake itself may be nothing compared with the collateral damage caused by a subsequent tsunami or other disaster unleashed by a tectonic shift.

“THERE WILL BE FAMINES, PESTILENCES, AND EARTHQUAKES IN VARIOUS PLACES” (MATTHEW 24:7).

THE BIBLE WARNS, “THE NATIONS WERE ANGRY, AND YOUR WRATH HAS COME, AND THE TIME OF THE DEAD, THAT THEY SHOULD BE JUDGED ... AND [GOD] SHOULD DESTROY THOSE WHO DESTROY THE EARTH” (REVELATION 11:18). THOSE WHO RECKLESSLY PLUNDER THE PLANET IN THE LAST DAYS WILL BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE.

MORAL COLLAPSE

When Jesus told His disciples that no one knew the day or hour of His return, He added, "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37).

What were the days of Noah like? In Genesis, chapter 6, the

Bible reports, "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ... The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth" (verses 5, 11, 12).

You don't have to look very far to see this happening today. In just a few years, the unthinkable in many societies has happened: Governments around the world have legalized marriages that fall outside of God's original design. Sexual immorality is now paraded openly, demanding and receiving acceptance in society at large.

Divorce has skyrocketed, and in most nations, more couples live together without being married than those who tie the knot. More children are born without the traditional structure of a mother and father than ever before.

It doesn't take much imagination to see that the signs of the end are being rapidly fulfilled. We can know that God is ready soon to act upon the world stage to save those whom He has created, loves, and sent His Son to redeem.

But it won't be by a flood this time as in the days of Noah—it will be the return of Christ to establish something new for those who trust in Him. No longer will famine, disease, or disaster stalk societies. "Neither shall they learn war anymore" (Micah 4:3).

What a glorious day that will be!

JESUS ALSO SAID THAT THE LAST DAYS JUST BEFORE HIS RETURN WOULD SEE ...

- False christs and prophets (Matthew 24:5, 11)
- Christ's followers being hated and killed (verses 9, 10)
- Abounding lawlessness, causing the love of many to grow cold (verse 12)
- The gospel preached in all the world (verse 14)
- Great tribulation (verse 21)
- The sun and moon darkened and stars falling (verse 29)

IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH IMAGINATION TO SEE THAT THE SIGNS OF THE END ARE BEING RAPIDLY FULFILLED. WE CAN KNOW THAT GOD IS READY SOON TO ACT UPON THE WORLD STAGE TO SAVE THOSE WHOM HE HAS CREATED, LOVES, AND SENT HIS SON TO REDEEM.



DOOMSDAY SCIENCE

Scientific discovery, technological power, and a touch of sci-fi creativity have led some to predict life on our planet could end soon. While we don't endorse these views, it shows that much of the world—even hardcore atheists—believe we could be living in the end of days. Some of the more common theories of doomsday include:

Nuclear Holocaust — The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists set its Doomsday Clock at three minutes to midnight on January 22, 2015, based primarily on the idea that a small rogue nation or group could obtain enriched nuclear material and cause worldwide chaos that would end all life on earth.

Climate Change — Some scientists warn that man-caused global warming threatens the future of life on earth, saying disappearing habitable land from rising sea levels will lead to devastating armed conflicts in a battle for resources.

Super Volcanoes — Immense eruptions spewing ash into the atmosphere could radically change earth's climate and kill billions. Some geologists predict that a colossal volcanic explosion under Yellowstone will someday devastate most of North America.

Disappearing Resources — Based on population growth and uncontained consumption, some scientists believe the earth will no longer have food or other crucial resources for human survival beyond 2100.

Catastrophic Asteroid Impact — Some scientists say that there is a realistic chance an asteroid could hit the earth in 850 years and wipe out all life. Other cosmic problems include star explosions, passing black holes, gamma-ray bursts, and galaxy collisions.

Giant Earthquakes — Since the April 2015 Nepal earthquake, seismologists are predicting giant earthquakes 32 times more vigorous than the 8.1 magnitude tremor that killed over 9,000. Such a large shaker would spawn devastating mega-tsunamis that would consume entire coastal cities.

Big Freeze / Firestorm — The sun will slowly expand into a red giant, pushing earth into outer space where it will turn into a giant ice cube in about 7.6 billion years—or simply cook it to death before sucking it into a fiery doom.

Pandemic Infectious Disease — Some scientists believe highly contagious viruses and genetic tampering could trigger a worldwide pandemic if accidentally exposed to the public.

Solar Storms — NASA predicts that increasing magnetic energy from the sun could cause a bombardment of solar flares and destroy all computers, power grids, and satellites, while triggering food shortages and water scarcity.

Alien Invasion — Are we alone in the universe? Some scientists believe life began on our planet from alien life from outer space and that extraterrestrials could invade earth for its resources.





**Does Hell
Burn Forever?**

**visit
HellTruth.com**



**No One Left Behind ... Alive
RaptureTruth.com**

The Manner of the Second Coming

DURING THE GULF WAR IN 1990, A SMALL TEAM OF U.S. NAVY SEALS CREATED A DIVERSION SO CONVINCING THAT IT COMPLETELY FOOLED THE IRAQI ARMY. ABOUT A DOZEN SEALS STORMED THE BEACHES OF KUWAIT AND CREATED SUCH HAVOC THAT IRAQI GENERALS BELIEVED THE U.S.-LED ATTACK WAS COMING FROM THE SEA.



In response, Iraq sent the majority of its army to repel this attack—only to find that the main U.S. force had come through the Saudi Arabian desert. The Iraqis had been duped! Within hours the war was over, and it all started with fewer than twenty soldiers.

Every general knows that in order to win a battle, his army must maintain the element of surprise. Clever diversionary tactics have helped clinch victory in numerous battles throughout history. When an army is distracted and watching a diversion, an enemy

can creep up from behind and conquer it.

We shouldn't be surprised to learn that the devil is planning to do the same thing. The deceiver has always wanted to be like God, and his last taunting gesture against heaven will be impersonating Jesus. Satan will pose as Christ by appearing upon the earth as a glorious being. He will deceive billions and receive the worship of a lost world.

How can you avoid being tricked?

SATAN WILL POSE AS CHRIST BY APPEARING UPON THE EARTH AS A GLORIOUS BEING. HE WILL DECEIVE BILLIONS AND RECEIVE THE WORSHIP OF A LOST WORLD.





We've seen evidence from Scripture that the return of Christ is certain, and we've examined a vast array of signs that precede His coming, many of which have already been fulfilled. But how will the actual event play out?

WILL WE KNOW WHEN IT IS HAPPENING?
WILL WE BE ABLE TO SEE AND HEAR IT?
IF SO, WHAT WILL IT LOOK AND SOUND LIKE?
ARE THERE OTHER BIBLICAL CLUES?

The Bible gives clear answers, and it's extremely important that we familiarize ourselves with the details of this climactic event. As Jesus warned, "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many" (Matthew 24:4, 5).

In the same conversation with His disciples, Jesus further cautioned, "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect ... Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it" (Matthew 24:24, 26).

Many throughout the centuries have tried to impersonate Christ, and they continue to do so to this day. Thus, it's inevitable that we will see even more of these deceptions as the authentic return of Christ draws near.

The apostle Paul warned us about these dangerous deceptions in 2 Corinthians 11:14: "For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light." Sadly, the dazzling deceptions of Satan will be so convincing that most people will be misled. But it doesn't need to be that way.

In order to spot counterfeit money, federal agents study the intricate details of genuine currency until they are thoroughly familiar with the real thing. Then the fake bills are more easily recognized. Likewise, we need to be so familiar with the genuine manner of Jesus' second coming—from a determined study of God's Word—that we can easily distinguish between the counterfeit event and the real event. Although Satan's deceptions will be strongly convincing, Christ has provided the details of His own return in order to help us separate truth from error.

Any appearing that is not in agreement with Scripture is a counterfeit and should be rejected. And in order to be genuine, all the details must line up with the Bible.

Isaiah 8:20 reminds us that anyone or anything contradicting the Word of God is promoting deception. "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." It's critical that we know exactly what the Scriptures say about the return of Christ. It could mean the difference between salvation and eternal loss.

So, what *does* the Bible tell us about the second coming of Jesus Christ?

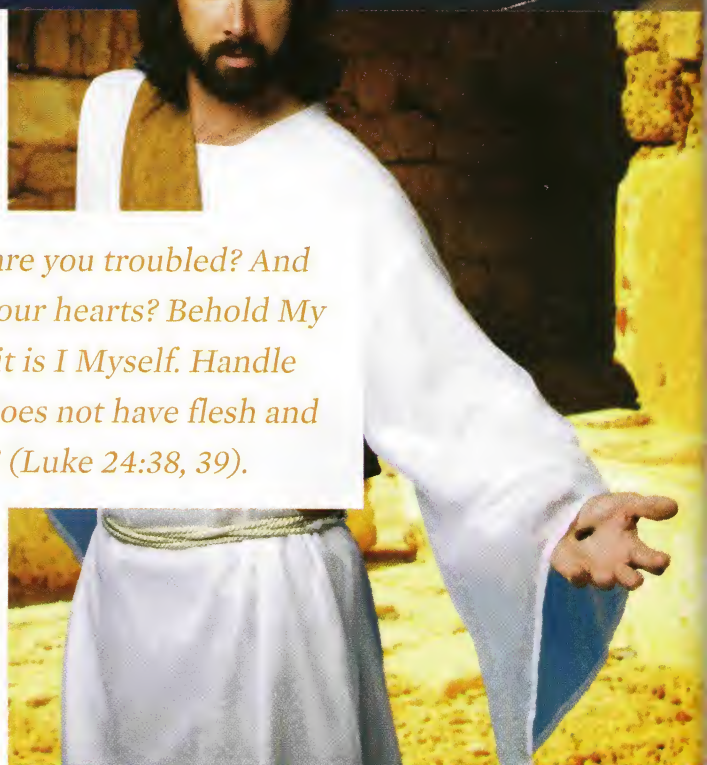


1. LITERAL, NOT SPIRITUAL

The second coming is not, as some teach, a mere spiritual coming into the heart at an individual's conversion. It does not take place at a person's death, nor is it figurative, to be manifested by better world conditions, for instance. These theories directly contradict Scripture.

When Jesus first appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, they were terrified and thought they were seeing a ghost. Jesus then showed them that He was real. "He said to them, 'Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have'" (Luke 24:38, 39). To reassure them even further, He ate some food in front of them.

Jesus will return in person with a body of flesh and bone. The second coming will be a literal, universal, visible, personal appearance of Christ, just as He promised. As you study the other details of His return, the literal nature of the second coming will become even more evident.



"He said to them, 'Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have'" (Luke 24:38, 39).

2. VISIBLE

In the first chapter of the book of Acts, the disciples looked on while Jesus ascended into heaven. Here's how it happened:

"While they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven'" (verses 9–11).

To encourage the disciples as they watched their Master disappear from view, two heavenly messengers taught them that Jesus would return to the planet in the *same manner* He departed. Christ left in the clouds, and He will come back in the clouds. He was visible when He went away, and He will be



visible when He comes again. He had a real body when He left, and He will return with a real body.

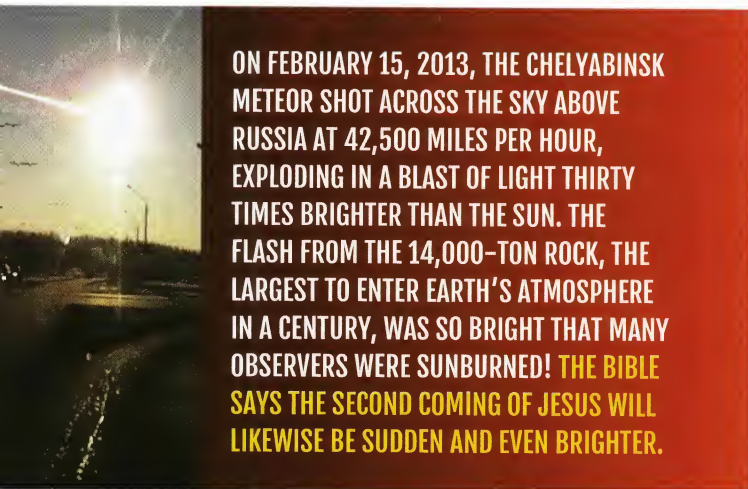
Only a small gathering of disciples witnessed Jesus ascending. How much more visible will Jesus' second coming be? To answer this question, let's look at something Jesus said when He was explaining His return:

"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30).

We can know with certainty that the return of Christ will be far greater in magnitude than His ascension. Jesus, in all His majesty, will arrive in the clouds with indescribable splendor!

Revelation 1:7 makes this point even more emphatic: "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and *every eye will see Him*" (emphasis added). This is too clear to misunderstand.

Every person who is alive at that time, saved or lost, will see Jesus return. A secret gathering up of God's people is not described in the Bible. (See more about the "secret rapture" on page 26.)



ON FEBRUARY 15, 2013, THE CHELYABINSK METEOR SHOT ACROSS THE SKY ABOVE RUSSIA AT 42,500 MILES PER HOUR, EXPLODING IN A BLAST OF LIGHT THIRTY TIMES BRIGHTER THAN THE SUN. THE FLASH FROM THE 14,000-TON ROCK, THE LARGEST TO ENTER EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE IN A CENTURY, WAS SO BRIGHT THAT MANY OBSERVERS WERE SUNBURNED! THE BIBLE SAYS THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS WILL LIKEWISE BE SUDDEN AND EVEN BRIGHTER.

Furthermore, Jesus compared His return to lightning that flashes from one horizon to the other. "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:27). And there's certainly nothing subtle about lightning, is there?



3. ARMY OF ANGELS

When Jesus comes back, He won't be alone. The Bible says that angels will accompany Him. "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory" (Matthew 25:31). Notice that it's not some angels, but all of them. Daniel 7:10 gives this description of the angels in heaven: "A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him." That's certainly a lot of angels!

Do you remember what happened at Jesus' tomb when one angel confronted the Roman guards?

"An angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men" (Matthew 28:2-4).

The brightness of just one angel caused the guards to collapse to the ground!

Angels are able to mask their glory, their brightness, but when Jesus returns, they won't be holding anything back. The brilliance of all heaven's angels—perhaps millions of them!—will light up the skies and make Jesus' second coming too bright for anyone to miss. (See also Luke 9:26.)

The second coming of Christ won't be visible to only a select group, either. Every man, woman, and child living in the world when Jesus returns will see Him. The staggering brightness of His coming will stretch from horizon to horizon, and the atmosphere will be charged with brilliant glory like lightning. It will not be an isolated event; it will be visible around the entire world.

4. IN THE SKY

It should also be noted that the second coming occurs above the earth, not on the earth. The Bible is clear that when Jesus returns, His feet will not touch the ground. “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds *to meet the Lord in the air*” (1 Thessalonians 4:17, emphasis added). This is why Jesus said He won’t return to any localized area:

“If they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:26, 27).

God’s people will meet the Lord in the air. Because Jesus does not touch the earth at His second coming, we can know He will not appear on the earth, as many teach. If someone who claims to be Christ is walking around or makes a television appearance, you can be certain it is *not* Jesus!

5. AUDIBLE

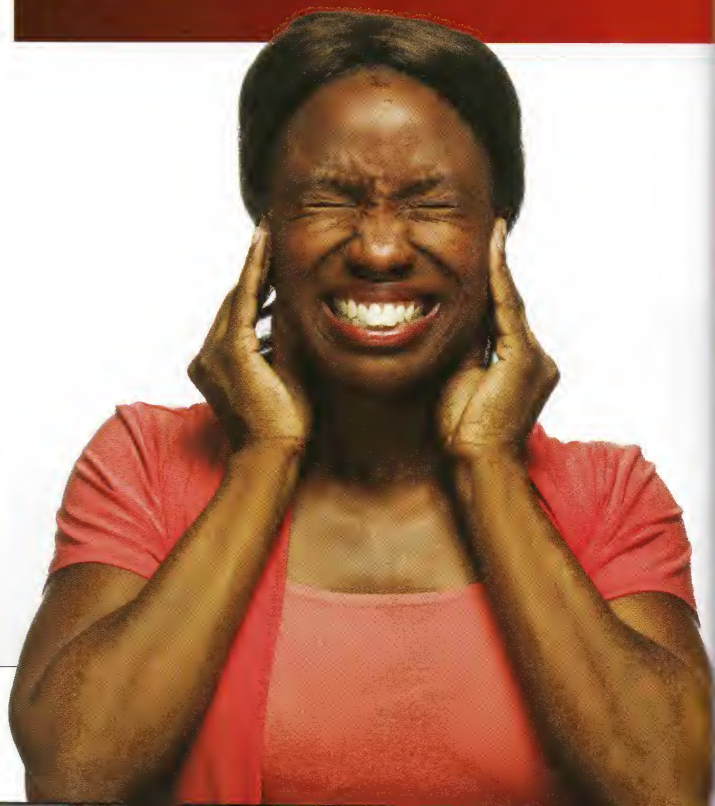
While it’s important to understand the visual nature of Jesus’ return, the Bible gives other details that help fill in the picture. For instance, it tells us that we won’t just see this event, we will hear it! “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

The prophet Jeremiah, speaking about the end of the world, adds, “The LORD will roar from on high, and utter His voice from His holy habitation; He will roar mightily against His fold. He will give a shout” (Jeremiah 25:30). And Psalm 50:3 says, “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent ... and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him.” The second coming of Jesus will be noisy beyond description. There will be nothing secret about it!

Just in case there is any confusion, the apostle Peter also referred to the immense sound: “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with *a great noise*” (2 Peter 3:10, emphasis added). It’s clear that Christ’s second coming will be loud! There will be shouts and trumpets and all kinds of intense sounds accompanying this event. No one will accidentally miss it. The return of Christ will be loud enough to even wake the dead! (More about that in chapter 5.)

**THREE TIMES 1 THESSALONIANS 4:16
EMPHASIZES THE AUDIBILITY
OF JESUS’ RETURN:**

**A SHOUT, THE VOICE OF AN ARCHANGEL,
AND THE TRUMPET OF GOD.**





6. CATAclysmic

The return of Christ will also shake the very foundations of the earth as a violent, global earthquake demolishes the planet:

“Every mountain and island was moved out of its place”
(Revelation 6:14).

“The earth is violently broken, the earth is split open, the earth is shaken exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall totter like a hut; its transgression shall be heavy upon it, and it will fall, and not rise again”
(Isaiah 24:19, 20).

“There was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. ... Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found” (Revelation 16:18, 20).

Wow! An earthquake powerful enough to flatten mountains would also set off every volcano on the planet and launch tremendous global tsunamis. Can you imagine? Entire mountain ranges disappear, islands vanish, and land masses are obliterated by gargantuan waves.

Furthermore, 2 Peter 3:12 explains that “the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat.” Since the world will be uninhabitable after Christ comes, no living person on earth could possibly miss this event!

No—there won’t be anything secret or quiet when Jesus comes again; every one of our senses will be bombarded with evidence!

7. PERSONAL

None of these other details would matter if Jesus’ coming weren’t also personal. The truth is that Jesus is coming for *you*.

“Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8).

If you love the Lord, you will be longing for His arrival with all of your heart. After all, He’s coming to rescue you—and everyone else—from all the pain, violence, poverty, disease, disaster, and death of this dark, broken world. Best of all, we will all see the face of our Redeemer and live with Him forever. Without a doubt, it will be the climax of all our most wonderful hopes and dreams!



Apocalypse

DEFINITION:

*An ancient Greek word that means “**uncovering**” or “**revealing**” used in the opening of the book of Revelation. It is commonly used to refer to any text dealing with the last days. The Old Testament book of Daniel is also described as an apocalyptic book.*

What About the “Secret” Rapture?

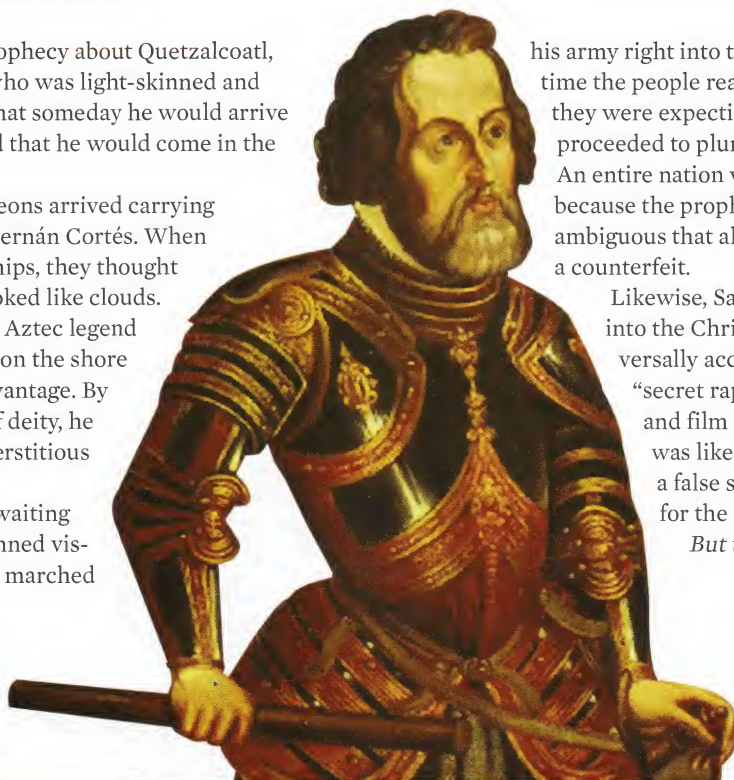


IN THE EARLY 1500S, THE AZTEC EMPIRE WAS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL AND SOPHISTICATED CIVILIZATIONS IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE. HOWEVER, WITHIN A YEAR'S TIME, THIS NATION OF MORE THAN TWO MILLION WAS CONQUERED AND ENSLAVED BY JUST 630 MEN. HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

The Aztecs had a prophecy about Quetzalcoatl, a legendary god-king who was light-skinned and bearded. It predicted that someday he would arrive from across the sea and that he would come in the clouds from the east.

In 1519, Spanish galleons arrived carrying conquistadors led by Hernán Cortés. When the Aztecs saw these ships, they thought their billowing sails looked like clouds. Cortés heard about the Aztec legend from people who lived on the shore and used this to his advantage. By assuming the mantle of deity, he hoped to befuddle superstitious King Montezuma II.

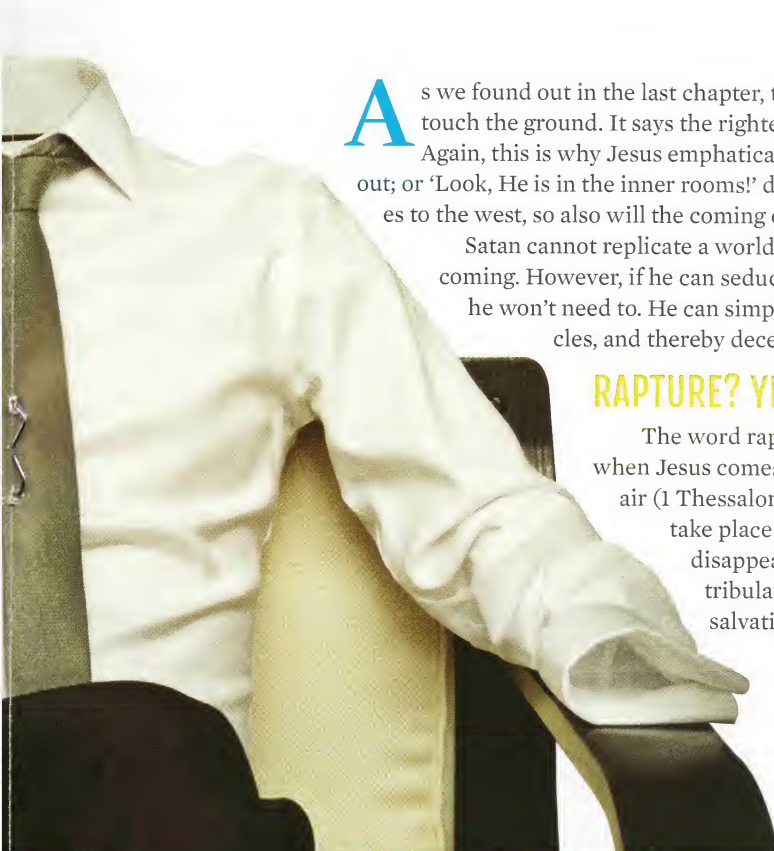
While the king was waiting to receive the light-skinned visitor with honor, Cortés marched



his army right into the center of the Aztec capital. By the time the people realized that Cortés was not the god they were expecting, it was too late. The conquistadors proceeded to plunder, enslave, and kill the people. An entire nation was deceived and destroyed, in part because the prophecies of their god's return were so ambiguous that almost anyone could have served as a counterfeit.

Likewise, Satan has introduced a strong delusion into the Christian world that has been almost universally accepted, a popular teaching called the “secret rapture,” one popularized by the book and film series *Left Behind*. This false theory was likely designed to lull God's people into a false sense of security and to prepare them for the devil's final master deception.

But that doesn't have to happen to you.



As we found out in the last chapter, the Bible is clear that when Jesus comes back, His feet will not touch the ground. It says the righteous will be caught up to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Again, this is why Jesus emphatically warned, “If they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:26, 27).

Satan cannot replicate a worldwide, cataclysmic event of the magnitude of the real second coming. However, if he can seduce the world into believing false theories such as the secret rapture, he won’t need to. He can simply show up in various places around the world, perform great miracles, and thereby deceive virtually the entire planet.

RAPTURE? YES! SECRET? NO!

The word rapture means, simply, “to be carried away with power.” It is true that when Jesus comes, the living righteous will be “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). But many have come to believe that this rapture will take place quietly—that faithful Christians around the world will suddenly disappear and that life on earth will continue for a seven-year period of tribulation. During this time, they say, many will have a second chance at salvation before the real end.

Although this secret rapture scenario appears comforting, there is no scriptural support for it. The Bible plainly teaches that when Jesus comes again, every one of our senses will be bombarded with the evidence. (See pages 22-25.)

With so much evidence in the Bible as to the true manner of Christ’s coming, how did people get the idea that the rapture will be a secret event?

As with most deceptions, the rapture theory is based on a few texts that have been taken out of context. Two main concepts in Scripture have been used to substantiate the so-called secret rapture.



The primary concept is that Jesus will come as “a thief in the night.”

The rapture theory assumes this means that Christ will come secretly to steal away the righteous and carry them away quietly to heaven.

Christ’s coming is indeed described as “a thief” several times. Here is one example: “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, *in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat*” (2 Peter 3:10, emphasis added).

Wait ... that doesn’t sound like a secret event, does it?

In describing His return as “a thief,” Christ did not intend to show that it would be quiet, but that it would be *sudden*—that the wicked would be taken by surprise. He said, “If the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Luke 12:39, 40). Likewise, the apostle Paul told the Christians in Thessalonica, “You, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief” (1 Thessalonians 5:4). God does not want His followers to be surprised, but to be watchful and ready.



ONE OF THE LOUDEST SOUNDS THE WORLD HAS EVER EXPERIENCED WAS THE VOLCANIC EXPLOSION OF KRAKATOA IN SOUTHWESTERN INDONESIA IN 1883. THE BLAST WAS EQUIVALENT TO 100 MEGATONS OF TNT AND COULD BE HEARD MORE THAN 2,000 MILES AWAY IN AUSTRALIA. IT IS ESTIMATED THE SOUND COULD BE HEARD BY THE HUMAN EAR ACROSS MORE THAN A TENTH OF THE EARTH’S SURFACE. **THE BIBLE SAYS THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS WILL BE LOUDER THAN ANY SOUND THE WORLD HAS EVER HEARD.**



The second concept used to support a secret rapture is found in the Gospel book of Luke.

“I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left” (17:34–36).

Secret rapture proponents say this passage shows that the saints will suddenly disappear when Jesus returns. But let’s take a closer look at the evidence and see what these verses actually teach.

In Luke 17:34–36, Jesus employed some of His favorite symbols to illustrate a simple point. At the end of time, there will be two groups of people living upon the earth—the lost and the saved ...

“TWO (SLEEPING) IN ONE BED”

A bed generally indicates sleep, and Jesus used sleep as a symbol for death. He once said to the disciples, “Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up” (John 11:11). “Then Jesus said to them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead’ ” (verse 14). In the resurrection at the last day, there will be two kinds of people sleeping in the grave: the lost and the saved.



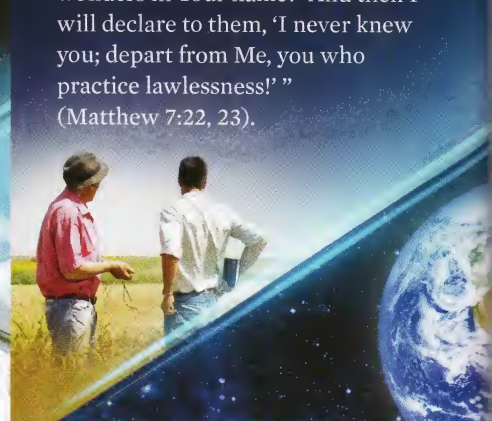
“TWO WOMEN GRINDING TOGETHER”

In Bible prophecy, a woman is a symbol of a church (Jeremiah 6:2). Grinding grain represents working with the Word of God. When Christ comes, there will be two kinds of churches: the false and the true. Both will be outwardly doing the same thing, but only one will be redeemed.



“TWO MEN IN THE FIELD”

The field represents the world (Matthew 13:38). When Jesus comes again, there will be two kinds of missionaries laboring in the field—the false and the true. This is why He said, “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ ” (Matthew 7:22, 23).



NO ONE LEFT BEHIND ... ALIVE

Another common misconception of the secret rapture theory is that people will continue to live on the earth for several years after Christ’s return. However, the Bible clearly teaches that when Jesus comes, there will be no human left alive on this planet.

In describing this time, the book of Jeremiah explains, “At that day the slain of the LORD shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall become refuse on the ground” (25:33).

One of the clearest descriptions of the earth after the second coming is given by Jesus:

“As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed” (Luke 17:26–30, emphasis added).

Notice that the wicked were destroyed on the same day that the Flood came to Noah and on the same day that the fire came to Sodom. Jesus emphasized that these earlier judgments, which destroyed all of the wicked, were examples of what would happen at His second coming. The Bible is clear that life on the earth does not continue for either man or beast after Jesus returns.

THROUGH THE TRIBULATION WITH CHRIST

This idea—that all the righteous will be raptured out of the world just before the tribulation and that the wicked will be left behind to endure seven difficult years—might be appealing. Perhaps that is why this theory has gained such widespread acceptance. But the Bible unmistakably teaches otherwise.

The phrase “seven years of tribulation” does not appear in Scripture. However, Jesus did say that a terrible time of trouble would come upon the world just *before* His return and that it would be more intense than any other in history. In His prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives, Jesus said,

“There will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:21, 22).

If the elect were not in the world during the great tribulation, they would not need the days to be shortened! And all through Scripture, we see examples of the Lord saving His people *through* tribulation, not *from* it:

- Noah was not saved from the Flood, but through it.
- Daniel was not saved from the lions’ den, but through it.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not saved from the fiery furnace, but through it.
- The children of Israel were not saved from Egypt before the plagues fell, but after. God demonstrated His love by preserving them through the plagues. In the same way, the righteous will be in the world when the seven last plagues fall (Revelation 16), but God will preserve them.

God hasn’t promised that our lives would always be easy. Christ prayed for His disciples, “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one” (John 17:15). Likewise, the apostle Paul declared, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). Paul also told a group of disciples, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).



In His parable of the two builders, Jesus taught that the storm comes to the wise man who builds on the rock just as surely as it comes to the foolish man who builds upon the sand (Matthew 7:24–27). The storm comes to all.

The good news is that God's children will survive the coming tribulation. They will endure by practicing some of the same survival skills used by the Great Basin bristlecone pine. Found on lonely mountaintops, some of these ancient evergreens—up to 4,000 years old—have weathered thousands of years of intense freezing wind, pounding rain, scorching sun, and violent electrical storms.

How do they manage to survive such harsh, adverse conditions? They send their roots deep, wrap them tenaciously around a solid rock, and hang on.

In the same way, the saved will have to sink their roots of faith deep into the Word of God and cling tenaciously to the mighty Rock of Ages. Remember that even though God does not always provide an escape from tribulation, He does promise to give us the power and strength to get through it. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).



VIEWS OF THE RAPTURE

✗ **PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE:** A SECRET RAPTURE OF GOD'S PEOPLE WILL OCCUR BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF A SEVEN-YEAR TRIBULATION AND THAT THE RETURN OF CHRIST WILL HAPPEN AT THE END OF THIS TIME.

✗ **MID-TRIBULATION RAPTURE:** A SECRET RAPTURE OF GOD'S PEOPLE WILL OCCUR THREE AND A HALF YEARS INTO A SEVEN-YEAR TRIBULATION PERIOD, INTERPRETING THE TIME PERIOD IN DANIEL 7:25 IN A LITERALISTIC WAY. THE ANTICHRIST WILL COMMIT THE “ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION” IN A LITERAL JERUSALEM TEMPLE.

✓ **POST-TRIBULATION RAPTURE:** ALL BELIEVERS ARE CAUGHT UP (THE LIVING AND THE DEAD) TO HEAVEN AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION. THIS BELIEF HOLDS THAT LIVING CHRISTIANS WILL GO THROUGH A FINAL TRIBULATION PERIOD.

ORIGINS OF THE SECRET RAPTURE

The most glaring inconsistency of the secret rapture is the belief that the antichrist will not appear until after the saints are caught away. The apostle Paul settled this matter clearly in 2 Thessalonians 2:1–4 ...

“Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (emphasis added).

These words are clear: Christ's coming will not take place “unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed.” The man of sin, the antichrist, will be revealed *before* Jesus comes.

Paul was not referring to a powerful person who will appear 2,000 years after his writing. Indeed, he said, “The mystery of lawlessness is *already at work*” (verse 7, emphasis added). Paul was already combating the emerging spirit of antichrist. The apostle John said the same (1 John 4:3). By the sixth century, the man of sin had matured, yet the crowning act of his deception will occur just before the return of Christ. “Then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8). There's no question that the antichrist will not arrive after the second coming, but before it.

Where, then, did this “futuristic” interpretation about the antichrist in prophecy originate? What does it have to do with the rapture? During the Reformation, most reformers identified the antichrist as papal Rome. Of course, this was not well received by the papacy. Rome countered this with a new interpretation of prophecy in order to turn people away from the notion that it was the antichrist power:

“Accordingly, toward the close of the century ... two of her most learned doctors set themselves to the task ... namely, that of diverting men’s minds from perceiving the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Antichrist in the papal system. The Jesuit Alcazar devoted himself to bring into prominence the preterist method of interpretation ... to show that the prophecies of Antichrist were fulfilled before the popes ever ruled at Rome, and therefore could not apply to the Papacy.

“On the other hand, the Jesuit Ribera tried to set aside the application of these prophecies to the papal power by bringing out the futurist system, which asserts that these prophecies refer ... to that of some future supernatural individual, who is yet to appear, and to continue in power for three and a half years. ... The [papal] Jesuit Ribera, about AD 1580, may be regarded as the Founder of the futurist system in modern times.

“It is a matter of deep regret that those who hold and advocate the futurist system at the present day, Protestants as they are for the most part, are ... helping to screen the Papacy from detection as the Antichrist” (Joseph Tanner, *Daniel and the Revelation*).

The origin of the two-phase, mid-tribulation coming of Christ has an equally questionable history. It was around 1830 that this view appeared. In a Scottish church pastored by Edward Irving, Margaret McDonald gave what was believed to be an inspired utterance. She spoke of the visible, open, and glorious second coming of Christ. But as the utterance continued, she spoke of another coming of Christ in which those who were truly ready would be secretly raptured.

John Nelson Darby, a preacher and writer in England, was most responsible for introducing this new teaching on a large scale. The secret rapture theory spread to the United States starting in the 1850s, where it received a boost when Cyrus Scofield incorporated it into the notes of his famous Scofield Reference Bible, published in 1909. Since that time it

has been widely accepted, often by people who are unaware that this was not a belief held by Christians of the early and Reformation church.

Oswald Smith, a prominent minister from Toronto, explains in his book *Tribulation or Rapture* that he once believed this theory, but when he began to search the Scriptures for himself, he discovered that there is not a single verse in the Bible to uphold this view. He confessed:

“I had been taught that the Greek word ‘parousia’ always referred to the Rapture and that other words were used for the Coming of Christ in glory ... but I found that this is not true. ... We might go through all the writers of the New Testament, and we would fail to discover any indication of the so-called ‘two stages’ of our Lord’s Coming. ... That theory had to be invented by man. Search and see. There is no verse in the Bible that even mentions it.”

DURING THE REFORMATION, MOST REFORMERS IDENTIFIED THE ANTICHRIST AS PAPAL ROME. OF COURSE, THIS WAS NOT WELL RECEIVED BY THE PAPACY. ROME COUNTERED THIS WITH A NEW INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY IN ORDER TO TURN PEOPLE AWAY FROM THE NOTION THAT IT WAS THE ANTICHRIST POWER.



The Great Tribulation

DEFINITION:

A great time of trouble for God’s people at the end of time spoken of by Daniel (Daniel 12:1), Jesus (Matthew 24:21), and the apostle John (Revelation 7:14). We are assured that the Lord will carry His faithful through this difficult time (Revelation 3:10). It occurs just before the second coming of Jesus.

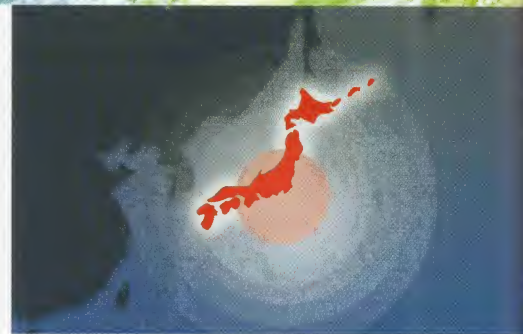
What Happens When Christ Returns?

ON MARCH 11, 2011, AT 2:46 PM, A RECORD-BREAKING EARTHQUAKE RUPTURED ALONG A 310-MILE FAULT ZONE OFF THE NORTHEAST COAST OF JAPAN. THE UNDERSEA MEGATHRUST, LOCATED FORTY-THREE MILES OFF THE SHORELINE, TRIGGERED A DEADLY TSUNAMI THAT REACHED UP TO 133 FEET HIGH IN SOME PLACES, WIPING OUT TOWNS AND VILLAGES AND WASHING AWAY CARS AND BUILDINGS AS IF THEY WERE LITTLE TOYS.

This 9.0 earthquake was the most powerful to hit Japan and the fourth most powerful since modern record-keeping began. It shifted the entire main island eight feet east and moved the earth on its axis up to ten inches. The death toll reached 15,891, with 6,152 injured and 2,584 missing.

One man saw the tsunami approaching and ran home to gather his belongings. His house was struck by a giant wave, and he was swept out to sea while clinging to the roof of his house. Fortunately, he was found after a few days. One woman rushed home to her elderly parents, who were too feeble to escape to higher ground. They were lost in the flood waters as she struggled to stand on furniture to escape a similar fate.

Just two days before the massive quake, a 7.2 temblor shook the area causing little damage and creating a mere 23-inch-high tsunami that hit the coast thirty minutes later. The aftershocks fooled everyone into believing the worst had passed; no one realized they were only foreshocks of the big one.



We've learned so far that false christs and prophets will reveal themselves before the second coming. And we now know the second coming is not some secret event experienced by only a few.

But what exactly happens when Christ does come? As we've seen already, the Scriptures foretell a cataclysmic event that will shake the entire globe. On the day when Jesus returns ...

- Earthquakes will rock the planet (Revelation 16:18, 20).
- The world will have experienced catastrophes (Jeremiah 4:26).
- Millions of angelic beings will appear in the heavens (Matthew 25:31).
- Every eye will see the King of the universe approaching (Revelation 1:7).



But what happens to the people living in these final minutes?

The second coming of Jesus will mark a division of the human race between those who have accepted His offer of salvation and those who have rejected it. When Christ returns, He comes to gather up the redeemed. “He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:31).

When the leader of a country travels to visit a new land, not everyone can be present to welcome the dignitary. But when Christ comes as King of kings, every believer who has ever lived, no matter his or her age, gender, race, education, or economic status, will join in the grand celebration. What amazing events make this universal gathering possible? Let’s look at them now ...



RESURRECTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS DEAD

A trumpet will sound announcing Christ’s return.

In that moment, all the righteous who have died in Christ will be raised from their graves with new bodies. “The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Though our loved ones may have met death with diseased and broken bodies, they will be raised with strong, beautiful forms untouched by corruption. The Bible tells us it will happen “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:52, 53).

Friends and family long separated by death will be reunited. Parents will embrace their little ones snatched from them by sickness or accident, rejoicing, “O Death, where is your sting? O [Grave], where is your victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:55). Christ’s work of restoration is complete as His people come out of their graves reflecting the image of God, just as Adam and Eve did at the creation.

THOUGH OUR LOVED ONES MAY HAVE MET DEATH WITH DISEASED AND BROKEN BODIES, THEY WILL BE RAISED WITH STRONG, BEAUTIFUL FORMS UNTOUCHED BY CORRUPTION.



LIVING BELIEVERS TRANSLATED

At the same time the saved who died are raised, the saved living will also experience a complete transformation of their bodies. They, too, will put on incorruption and be changed. “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep [die], but we shall all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51). The marks of age and degradation are forever removed from their bodies.

One group doesn’t take precedence over another either. The righteous dead who are resurrected do not go to heaven ahead of the righteous living. Paul describes, “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

When Jesus returns, all believers will be present to see Him come. All the saved will rise to meet Him in the air. Whether living or dead, all believers will be changed and together will welcome their Creator and Redeemer at the same time.

DEATH OF UNBELIEVERS

While the brilliance of Christ’s coming brings joy to those who have long awaited His return, it strikes terror in the hearts of those who have rejected salvation. The saved are filled with elation when Jesus appears; the lost are consumed with dread.

Overcome with horror, the unsaved seek to hide from Jesus. They cry out to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (Revelation 6:16, 17).

The brightness of Jesus’ appearing is a welcome sight for the redeemed, but a fearful sight for the wicked. All those who have denied Christ and His loving gestures of salvation will die. “Her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her” (Revelation 18:8).

The “lawless one,” the earthly leader who has drawn people into sin, will also perish, “The Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8). However, this death is not the final death—the second death (Revelation 2:11)—but is called the first death (see Revelation 20:6).

After long, oppressive eras of suffering, God’s people will finally be delivered from the bondage of Satan’s evil. The mark of his power, etched upon the cemeteries of our land, is finally lifted.





Resurrection of the Dead

DEFINITION:

The restoration of life and body, including personality, subsequent to death. Christians look forward to this hope of the dawn of eternal life that occurs at the second coming. There will be a second resurrection—of the wicked—at the end of the millennium at the final judgment. (See Revelation 20:5, 12, 13.)

Events After Jesus Returns

THE WORLD'S LARGEST FIXED SCREEN RESIDES IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, STRETCHING 117 FEET BY 97 FEET, TOTALING A WHOPPING 11,349 SQUARE FEET. THE THEATER OPENED IN SEPTEMBER 1996 AND SEATS 540 PEOPLE.

However, on May 5, 2015, this screen was “blown out of the water” when sixty projectors generated more than a million lumens to blast a film onto a galactic-sized 420,000 square-foot surface—the Hoover Dam, one of the engineering marvels of the modern world.

That's certainly a huge movie display, but someday, God will present the history of humanity and reveal the ultimate destiny of every person who has ever lived on a much bigger screen. Reserved seats are unnecessary, as we'll all watch this panoramic view at the end of the thousand-year period called the “millennium.” But what is that?



To be precise, the word “millennium” does not appear in the Bible. It comes from two Latin words, “mille” and “-ennium,” which together simply mean “a thousand years.” The term has been used by many Christians to designate the thousand-year period mentioned in Revelation 20, where the expression “thousand years” occurs six times in verses 1 through 7.

Today there is much divided opinion in the Christian world over the events associated with the beginning, duration, and ending of the millennium. For this reason, we will carefully examine what the Bible really says about this important era of time ...

DID YOU KNOW THE WORD “MILLENNIUM” DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE BIBLE? IT COMES FROM TWO LATIN WORDS, “MILLE” AND “-ENNIUM,” WHICH TOGETHER SIMPLY MEAN “A THOUSAND YEARS.”





HISTORY OF HUMANITY

EVENTS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MILLENNIUM

You've already learned that when Jesus returns, the righteous dead are resurrected and, along with the living righteous, meet Jesus in the clouds and are transported to heaven. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17.) You also know the living unsaved are destroyed by the brightness of His coming, and the unsaved who are already dead simply stay that way.

What remains, then, is a desolate earth. "At that day the slain of the LORD shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall become refuse on the ground" (Jeremiah 25:33; see also 4:23–26). Obviously, life on earth for humans during the thousand years is not possible.

Notice how the Bible describes what happens next:

"I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while" (Revelation 20:1–3).

While the saved are in heaven and the unsaved lie dead on the earth, the devil will be bound to the planet for 1,000 years. It will not be a place you'd want to be! The world is described as a "bottomless pit," which is the Greek word *abussos*, meaning

"dark, waste, desolate region, and state of chaos." It is the equivalent of the Old Testament word used in Jeremiah 4 and also in Genesis 1:2 when describing the earth before creation as being "without form, and void." The second coming of Jesus reduces the world to a state of disorder as it was before the creation.

Is Satan held to the earth with a literal chain and thrown into a literal pit? No. Fallen angels are not bound by physical chains. The reason Satan is limited to the earth is that "he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished." The only way to prevent his evil work is to remove all people from him and to confine him to a place no one else will be. It is the circumstances of an empty world that bind the devil.



EVENTS DURING THE MILLENNIUM

While Satan is a captive on earth, the people of God reign with Him in heaven. This is what Jesus spoke of when the disciple Peter asked Him, “Lord, where are You going?” (John 13:36). Jesus answered, “Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.” What place will the followers of Christ go?

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:1–3).

The apostle John also described where the saved will be: “They lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4). These saints are “with Christ” in heaven, which is the New Jerusalem, and will come down to the earth at the end of the millennium (see Revelation 3:12; 21:2).

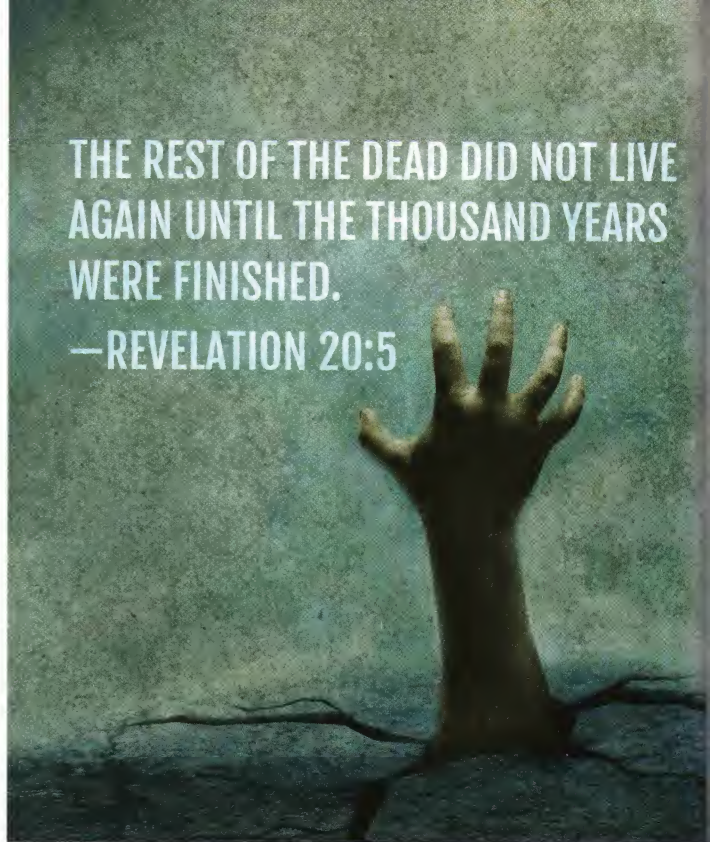
John further explained, “I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them” (Revelation 20:4). The saints will not determine who will be saved or lost. This work will have been accomplished by God already. Rather, the work of judgment during the millennium involves the redeemed going over the case of every evil angel and lost human so that no question remains in the mind of the redeemed concerning God’s justice and mercy.

During the 1,000 years, the saints will “judge” wicked angels and men. Paul described this review of the books in heaven: “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?” (1 Corinthians 6:2, 3).

Imagine being in heaven and discovering that a loved one you expected to be there is missing. You would naturally wonder why. God provides an opportunity for every question to be asked and answered. All doubts will forever be laid to rest.

THE REST OF THE DEAD DID NOT LIVE AGAIN UNTIL THE THOUSAND YEARS WERE FINISHED.

—REVELATION 20:5



EVENTS AT THE END OF THE MILLENNIUM

What happens at the end of the thousand years? The Bible says, “Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations” (Revelation 20:7, 8).


The reason the devil can once more deceive people is because the wicked are raised from the dead. This is explained in verse 5, which says, “The rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.” The righteous dead were resurrected at the coming of Jesus, so the “rest of the dead” refers to those who were not raised—that is, the lost. Jesus refers to this as the “resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:29).

Christ and His people now descend to the earth, where He will at long last end the great cosmic controversy with Satan and begin the millennial judgment. But first, the devil is “released for a little while” (Revelation 20:3) to perform his last act of deception. He rallies the wicked to surround “the camp of the saints and the beloved city” (verse 9). Instead of entering the New Jerusalem through the salvation of Jesus, they are determined to storm the city and capture it by force.

At this time God sets up His great “white throne” of judgment. The entire human race, all who have ever lived, stand before the Lord.

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books” (Revelation 20:11, 12)





ALL OF GOD'S PEOPLE WILL BE FOREVER FILLED WITH JOY AND GLADNESS IN THE PRESENCE OF THEIR LOVING CREATOR!

The redeemed are safe inside the city while the unsaved are outside. The apostle Paul also spoke of this time when he said, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10). Jesus described those who reject Him as "weeping" at this moment and said there will be "gnashing of teeth" (Luke 13:28). Why have the wicked been raised to stand before God's throne? Just as the redeemed confirm the justice of God during the millennium, so the wicked—including Satan and his angels—will agree with the righteous decisions of the Lord. Paul's prediction is fulfilled:

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9–11, emphasis added).

When the books are opened, every sinner who has refused the grace of God brings to mind every sinful act he has committed. Then, revealed to every man and woman is a grand review of the entire plan of salvation. All will see every act God made in seeking to save humanity from death. From Adam's temptation and fall, to the cross of Christ, and the whole history of God's people being persecuted, each person knows the part he played in accepting or rejecting the mercy of the Lord.

Finally, all will acknowledge with one voice: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!" (Revelation 15:3). The loving and just character of the Creator will be affirmed by everyone


who has ever lived. Satan's great accusations against God—that He is unjust and unmerciful—will fall like ashes.

Now, as one final effort is made to attack the city, God moves on the behalf of His people. "Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them" (Revelation 20:9). "Anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (verse 15). The wicked do not burn forever, for "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Jesus affirmed that this fire of hell "is able to destroy both soul and body" (Matthew 10:28). The "everlasting fire" is an unquenchable fire with permanent results that will completely consume the wicked and cleanse the earth of all sin. (See page 19 to learn more about hellfire.) The Bible says,

"For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch" (Malachi 4:1).

When all has been consumed and the pollution of sin has been removed from the earth, God will recreate the planet as it was in the beginning. "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Revelation 21:1). "Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new'" (verse 5).

The great battle between good and evil is finally over! Sin is no more. From this point onward, all of God's people will be forever filled with joy and gladness in the presence of their loving Creator, who will wipe every tear from their eyes.



ALL WILL ACKNOWLEDGE WITH ONE VOICE, "GREAT AND MARVELOUS ARE YOUR WORKS, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY! JUST AND TRUE ARE YOUR WAYS, O KING OF THE SAINTS!" (REVELATION 15:3).

VIEWS OF THE MILLENNIUM

Amillennialism — The rejection of the doctrine that Jesus will have a literal, thousand-year-long, physical reign on the earth. The term literally means “no millennialism.”

Dispensational Premillennialism — The belief that Jesus will return before a seven-year tribulation period and take Christians to heaven by means of a secret rapture. Christ would then physically return after the tribulation.

Historical Premillennialism — The belief that Jesus will physically return before the millennium. In contrast to dispensational premillennialism, historical premillennialism says Christ comes for all His people after the tribulation but before the millennium.

Millennialism — A belief that there will be a “golden age” on earth in which Christ will reign for a thousand years before the final judgment.

Premillennialism — The belief that Christ’s second coming occurs before the millennium.

Postmillennialism — The belief that Christ’s second coming occurs after the millennium.

Last Judgment

DEFINITION:

Also known as the Great White Throne Judgment, the final phase of judgment in which all humanity stands before God’s throne and acknowledges His love and mercy. It follows the resurrection of the unsaved at the end of the millennium and precedes the final destruction of all sin and evil.

THE MILLENNIUM BEGINS



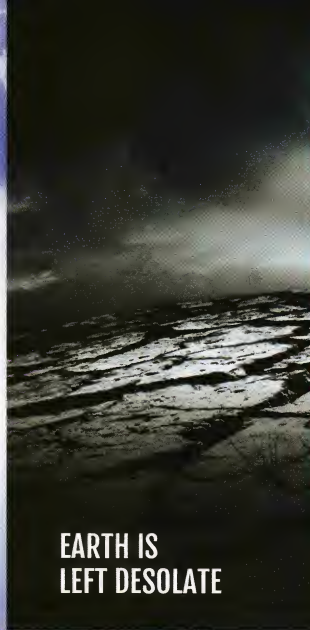
**THE RETURN
OF JESUS**



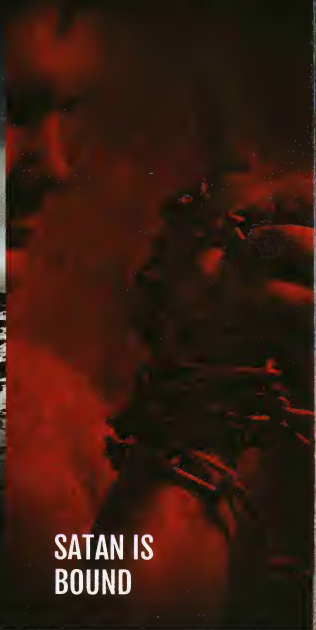
**THE RIGHTEOUS
DEAD RAISED**



**THE LIVING SAINTS
CAUGHT UP**



**EARTH IS
LEFT DESOLATE**



**SATAN IS
BOUND**

DURING THE MILLENNIUM



**THE SAINTS
IN HEAVEN WITH
CHRIST**



**THE SAINTS JUDGE
WICKED ANGELS
AND PEOPLE**



**THE WICKED
REMAIN DEAD**



**SATAN REMAINS
BOUND**



**THE EARTH
AT REST**

END OF THE MILLENNIUM



**CHRIST, THE SAINTS,
AND THE HOLY
CITY DESCEND**



**THE WICKED
DEAD RAISED**



**SATAN
LOOSED**



**THE LAST
JUDGMENT**



**SATAN AND
THE UNSAVED
DESTROYED
AND THE EARTH
RECREATED**

Preparing for the Return of Jesus



AS PEOPLE LIVING IN THESE TROUBLED TIMES CONSIDER THE MOUNTING PROBLEMS FACING CIVILIZATION AND THE GROWING FEAR THEY WILL ENCOUNTER A MAJOR DISASTER AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES, A WHOLE NEW CULTURE HAS EMERGED AMONG THEM.

They are known by many different titles—survivalists, preppers, retreaters. Concerned about natural disasters, social mayhem, terrorist attacks, or even nuclear war, they are going the second mile in preparing to survive. Survivalists come in varying degrees of preparation. Many simply set aside flashlight batteries and water to prepare for common situations such as floods, tornadoes, and earthquakes. However, others have built underground bunkers capable of sustaining life for several years. Some emphasize self-defense in case of social collapse and food riots, while others are getting ready for nuclear disasters and worldwide pandemics.

The culture even has its own lingo. BOB stands for “bug-out bag,” which contains articles you take with you should you need to flee quickly. EDC means “everyday carry,” which are things you carry with you at all times in case a disaster strikes suddenly. And you might even

be labeled by them as a “Pollyanna”—someone in denial about the possibility of a large-scale disaster.

But do you really need to keep up with programs like *Doomsday Preppers* on the National Geographic Channel to be ready for the end of the world as we know it?





As we've seen, the Bible teaches that someday soon Christ will return and everything will drastically change. How can we be ready for it when that happens?

Should we start by storing a few months' worth of provisions and head for the hills? There are certainly wise preparations you can make in case of a disaster, but what does God tell us is the most important preparation for the second coming of Jesus?

For one thing, ongoing communication with God is crucial in surviving coming end-time events. When speaking of how to survive the calamities immediately prior to His return, Jesus said, "Watch therefore, *and pray always* that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36, emphasis added).

Wilderness lookouts spend their summers living in a tower surrounded by forest. During the fire season, their job is to continually watch for fires caused by careless campers or a lightning strike. They stay in constant radio communication with forestry stations. Likewise, we should "continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2) and, because "the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers" (1 Peter 4:7).

Having a vibrant prayer life and an ongoing relationship with the Lord are the most important components in surviving the last-day deceptions and in being joyfully reunited with Jesus at the second coming.

PROVISIONS FOR THE END TIME

One of the fundamentals in preparing to survive a calamity is to make sure you have the basic elements of food and water.

But Jesus also said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). The book of Job, a historical story about a man who lived through calamity after calamity, affirms, "I have treasured the words of His mouth *more than my necessary food*" (Job 23:12, emphasis added).

Being rooted in the Word of God will help you avoid being deceived in the last days and to live a life that honors the Lord. Remember, Christ warned that the final deception will be so persuasive that if it were possible, even the saved would be tricked by it! (Matthew 24:24). Jesus also said that the wise and the foolish will experience a tremendous storm, but that only those who *hear and do* His words will survive until the end (Matthew 7:24–27).





In John 7:37, 38, Jesus proclaimed, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me ... out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” To have the Living Water of Christ means to allow Him to come into your heart so that you can be like Him. “Most assuredly ... unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

As we wait for Jesus, He wants us to prepare our characters for living in the eternity to come: “Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love” (2 Peter 1:5–7). To help us do this, He has promised to “put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts” (Hebrews 8:10).

One way to keep Jesus at the forefront of your life is to share Him with others. First Timothy 4:16 says, “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” This is the time to boldly set our lamp on a hill and keep the gospel light blazing bright! (See Matthew 5:14–16.) “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods” (Matthew 24:45–47).

HAVE ENOUGH OIL

Finally, the Bible warns, “Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation’ ” (2 Peter 3:3, 4).

One way to be unprepared for Christ’s return is to underestimate the enemy and lose a sense of vigilance. True, there are extremists who are like Chicken Little, constantly telling us the sky is falling. It’s easy to brush off fanatics and become lethargic about the times in which we live.

Before the invasion of Pearl Harbor, noted journalist Clarke Beach wrote on September 6, 1941, “A Japanese attack on Hawaii is regarded as the most unlikely thing in the world, with one chance in a million of being successful. Besides boasting more powerful defenses than any other post under the American flag, it is protected by distance.” Beach misjudged the power of the adversary!



In the parable of the ten virgins, Christ taught that in the last days some Christians would fall asleep while waiting for the Bridegroom to return. They would lose faith and patience. They would end up running out of oil—that is, the light of the Holy Spirit. That's why when speaking of His return, Jesus said we must always ...

"Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"

(Mark 13:33–37).

Preparation for Christ's coming is more than advertising that we are a member of the right church or carrying around a baptismal certificate. Being ready for Jesus isn't just about having a religious pin stuck on your lapel. It means to have the power of Christ living in your heart, praying daily for the vital oil of the Spirit to help you be ready.

Like the five foolish virgins who tried to get oil for their lamps from their friends, you can't borrow a relationship with Jesus. It must be personal. Do you have a genuine friendship with the Bridegroom?

You can be ready for the soon return of Jesus by taking time each day to come to the cross of Christ. Ask Him into your heart and to wash away all of your sins. Invite the Spirit to empower you to be prepared for that great day when our heavenly Bridegroom will come to receive those who are truly ready for His coming. And when the shout goes out, "Look, the bridegroom is coming!" you can lift up your torch with great joy and reply, "This is our great and loving God, let's go out to meet Him!"



YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

QUESTION: WHAT IS THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON?

Answer: “They gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon” (*Revelation 16:16*).

The word “Armageddon” is something of a mystery, appearing only in this verse and nowhere else in Greek literature. It harkens back to the many battles in Israel’s history centering around the mountain of Megiddo. This is also the same location of Mt. Carmel, where Elijah had a showdown with the prophets of Baal.

Contrary to what most people teach, the battle of Armageddon is not a war between political powers—such as Russia, China, and Israel. Instead, it is the final battle between Christ and Satan.

The first phase of Armageddon is detailed in Revelation 12:17, when the dragon makes war with the woman: “The dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God.” The ultimate conclusion of this battle takes place at the end of the 1,000 years, when the devil rallies “Gog and Magog,” a symbolic name for the enemies of God’s people, to attack the holy city (Revelation 20:8).

As part of his last push in Armageddon, Satan will, someday soon, impersonate Christ and encourage the world to worship the beast. Preparation for Armageddon, to stand firm in the face of these deceptions, needs to take place within our hearts now, not when the final events are already in full swing.

The saved need not fear the idea of Armageddon. Instead, it should focus us on a relationship with the Savior. Tanks, guns, or a bunker stocked with food will not protect anyone. Instead, we need to be clothed in the armor of Jesus’ righteousness.



QUESTION: WHERE ARE WE IN THE TIMELINE OF PROPHECIES IN REVELATION?

Answer: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (*Revelation 14:12*).

We are living in the time described in Revelation 13 and 14. These chapters deal with the two great beasts. In chapter 13, the first beast—the one that rises from the sea and has seven heads and ten horns—was wounded, but its “deadly wound was healed.” This is a segment of time that has already passed. Then the second beast—the United States—which has two horns like a lamb and speaks like a dragon (Revelation 13:11)—comes on the scene and is ready to make an image to the first beast. It tries to force everyone on earth to worship the first beast.

In prophecy, a lamb is a symbol of Christ and a dragon is a symbol of Satan. We are going to see political and religious forces within America encouraging the Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches to unite to form a one-world church that, sadly, undermines God’s law for the sake of a false peace. However, there will be a people who will remain true to God and refuse to receive the mark of the beast; these are “those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12).

We are on the verge of history in which world powers will hedge in God’s people and force a decision for or against God’s kingdom. This conflict will spotlight the fourth commandment, the law that focuses on God as Creator. That’s why the first angel’s message warns us to “worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Revelation 14:7). Those who choose to keep God’s law will triumph. Jesus assures that “he who endures to the end will be saved” (Matthew 10:22).





144,000



QUESTION: WHO ARE THE 144,000 MENTIONED IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION?

Answer: “I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, ‘Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.’ And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed” (Revelation 7:2–4).

During the time of Jesus’ first coming, the twelve disciples were a type of “special forces.” After three and a half years of intensive personal training with Jesus, the disciples were used by God to achieve great victories for the kingdom of heaven. They penetrated Satan’s dominion to spearhead a great revival and expansion of the Christian faith.

But the book of Revelation tells us of another special forces unit, a vast “army” of 144,000. They have a special relationship with the Lamb, and they are sealed with a special name. They also sing a special song. Why are the 144,000 so important? Because they are commissioned with the greatest mission in the last days: to prepare the world for Jesus’ return.

Yet many are bewildered by this group—and a lot of confusion exists about them. So what exactly is this holy army and who will fill its ranks before the end?

We are told this distinctive group is comprised of 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, which are Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. Because the ten northern tribes of Israel were conquered by the Assyrians and dispersed hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, it is unlikely Revelation is speaking of 12,000 leaders from these literal ancient Hebrew tribes. Frequently, the names used in the book of Revelation have a symbolic meaning. Thus, the 144,000 will be composed of believers in Christ from around the world.

QUESTION: WILL THE TEMPLE BE REBUILT IN JERUSALEM BEFORE JESUS RETURNS?

Answer: “Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple” (Matthew 12:6).

With the constant turmoil threatening stability in the Middle East, many Bible commentators are speculating about whether the Jewish temple will be rebuilt in the years to come. Entire Christian ministries are established to assist in the building of the temple to, they say, hasten the return of Jesus. For many, such an event will signal the start of the final events of earth’s history.

However, most of this speculation for a rebuilt temple springs from a single vague reference in 2 Thessalonians 2 dealing with the antichrist: “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (verses 3, 4).

Many say that for the antichrist to sit in the temple, it will need to be rebuilt. Those who support this belief are known as “Christian Zionists,” and they include such popular writers as Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye, and John Hagee. Their published book sales exceed 70 million copies—including the popular *Left Behind* series. Their beliefs are endorsed by some of the largest theological institutions.

But are they correct? To begin, let’s go to 1 Chronicles 17:11, 12: “When your days are fulfilled ... I will set up your seed after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever.” This prophecy given to King David says his offspring will build the temple.

This text is one of the clearest examples of a dual prophecy found in Scripture. It is primarily speaking of Jesus, the Son of David, who built a spiritual temple, His church. This is why Jesus told the religious leaders, “‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ Then the Jews said, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ But He was speaking of the temple of His body” (John 2:19–21).

And, of course, the church is called the body of Christ. So when Paul speaks of the antichrist sitting over the temple of God in 2 Thessalonians, it’s not referring to a rebuilt Jewish temple but rather to the antichrist power placing himself at the head of the Christian church!



QUESTION: WHAT IS THE “ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION”?

Answer: “Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place ... then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Matthew 24:15, 16).

Jesus here was responding to this question from His disciples: “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3). Christ then spoke of this abomination and said, “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (verse 21).

Some scholars have identified Christ’s reference as a fulfilled prophecy—when Antiochus Epiphanes stopped the temple sacrifices between 168 and 165 BC. They believe the pig he offered on the altar was the abomination. But this cannot be the case because that event happened more than 100 years before Jesus’ birth—and Jesus put this event in the future. Others see the abomination as the temple in Jerusalem overthrown by the antichrist.

Jesus pointed us to the book of Daniel for the answer. Here we find three aspects to this abomination. The first involved the destruction of the temple in Daniel’s time. The second relates to the desolation in Jesus’ time (involving the second temple). And the third speaks of the abomination of desolation at the end of time (which involves the whole church).

The first abomination is actually a “shadow” of the others. It happened when Nebuchadnezzar took the vessels of the house of God and carried them to the temple of a false god (Daniel 1:1, 2). Then Solomon’s temple was burned to the ground.

The next abomination relates to the time in which Jesus expressed His displeasure of the evils taking place in God’s temple.

This activity eventually led to the destruction of the second temple by the Romans in AD 70. This is why, when He left that temple for the last time and saw with prophetic eyes its coming demolition, Jesus said, “See! Your house is left to you desolate” (Matthew 23:38).

In the next chapter, He made it even clearer that He was speaking of the destruction of the temple, when the Romans would not leave one stone upon another (Matthew 24:1, 2). In the book of Luke, Jesus worded it this way: “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her” (Luke 21:20, 21).

The final desolation, spoken of by Daniel (8:13; 11:31; 12:11), speaks of the rise of a false religious power, or antichrist, that will, at the end of time, bring defilement and desolation into God’s spiritual temple—His church—mingling paganism with Christianity.

Just as God gave early Christians a warning to flee Jerusalem before its desolation, so at the end of time, the Lord gives us a similar warning that when a corrupt church unites with worldly powers, we know the time of the end is at hand. We must flee Babylon or receive of her plagues. “And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. ... For in one hour she is made desolate’ ” (Revelation 18:4, 19).

QUESTION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT THE EUPHRATES RIVER DRIES UP TO MAKE WAY FOR THE KINGS OF THE EAST?

Answer: “Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared” (Revelation 16:12).

In the final battle of Armageddon, the Bible says the river Euphrates will be dried up to make way for the kings of the east. This is a symbolic image hearkening back to when Babylon was defeated by the Persian King Cyrus, when his forces diverted the river Euphrates from flowing freely into the middle of the city, causing the water level to lower and opening the way for his soldiers to sneak in under its immense walls and conquer Babylon.

In this passage, as is common in the Bible, the water represents people (Revelation 17:15). The drying up of the river Euphrates means that the people who have been supporting the beast (Satan’s kingdom, Babylon) will withdraw their support for it. Its coalition of allies (Revelation 16:13, 14) will fall apart (Revelation 16:19). The kings of the east likely represent Jesus and His second coming, which will halt the battle of Armageddon and save His people (Revelation 6:14–17; 16:18–21; 19:11–20).



DICTIONARY OF END-TIME TERMINOLOGY

Abomination of Desolation — A substitute system of worship that is deplorable to God because it stands in opposition to truth. The phrase is found in the King James Version of Matthew 24:15 and in various forms in the book of Daniel. It literally means: “a detestable thing that appalls.”

Apostasy — A willful turning away from God referred to many times in the Bible with terms such as rebellion, falling away, and adultery. The term “Great Apostasy” has been used to describe Papal Rome’s rise to power and bringing pagan ideas and practices into the church.

Armageddon — Appears once in Scripture (Revelation 16:16) and literally means “mountain of Megiddo,” a location of many battles in Israel’s history. Some believe this is a literal battle between two earthly end-time forces, but it actually symbolizes the final conflict between Christ and Satan.

Dispensationalism — A “futurist” method of interpreting the Bible. It holds that God has yet to fulfill His promises to the literal nation of Israel and that most of the book of Revelation is future.

Four Horsemen — Revelation 6 describes four horses of different colors that describe events on earth after the death of Jesus and before His second coming.

Futurism — An interpretation of Revelation as applying in a literal sense to future events on a global scale (as opposed to symbolic or historic ways). Such beliefs are connected to premillennialism and dispensationalism and are the basis of the “secret rapture” theory, as seen in the *Left Behind* series.

Secret Rapture — A popular but questionable belief that Jesus will return secretly before the tribulation to snatch up, or rapture, His church while leaving the unsaved on earth to suffer through the plagues.

Historicism — A method of interpreting the Bible with historical events and people. It holds to a continuous fulfillment of prophecy and was the view of the major Protestant Reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin.

Idealism — Also known as the “spiritual” or “allegorical” approach to interpreting Bible prophecy, in which all imagery is viewed as symbols and not literal events.

Marriage Supper of the Lamb — An event spoken of in Revelation 19:6–9 that unites Christ and His church after His second coming. It harkens back to a parable of Jesus in Matthew 22:1–14. Four times the book of Revelation speaks of the church as the bride of Christ.

New Earth — Spoken of twice in the New Testament, it refers to the earth being recreated at the end of the millennium after it is cleansed by fire from heaven. Its capital city will be the New Jerusalem. See Revelation 21:1–4.

New Jerusalem — The name of the city in heaven being prepared by Christ for His people (John 14:1–3). It will come to the earth as the new capital at the end of the millennium (Revelation 21:1, 2).

Preterism — The view that most prophecies of the Bible have already happened. Events spoken of in the book of Revelation are interpreted as having happened in the first century.

Type — A biblical person, thing, or event that foreshadows a greater person, thing, or event. A spotless lamb brought to the sanctuary in the Old Testament was a type of Christ that foreshadowed His sacrifice.

HOLY BIBLE

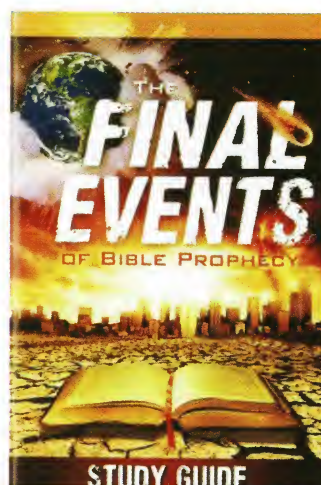
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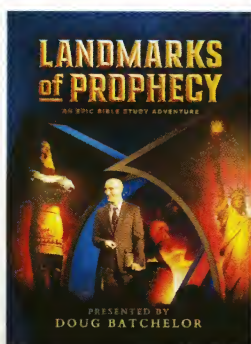
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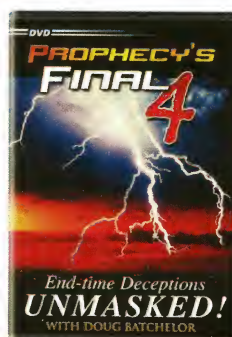
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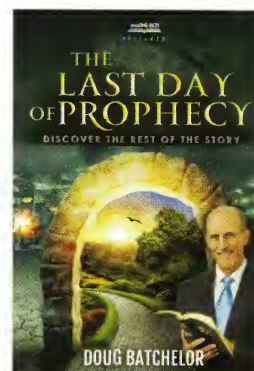
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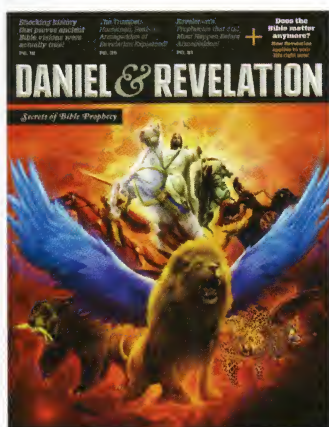
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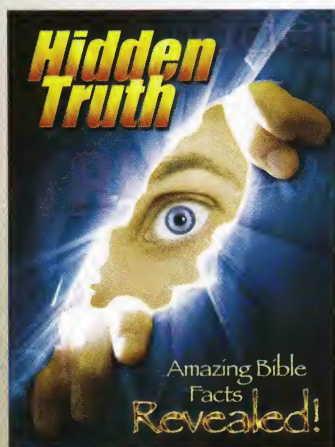
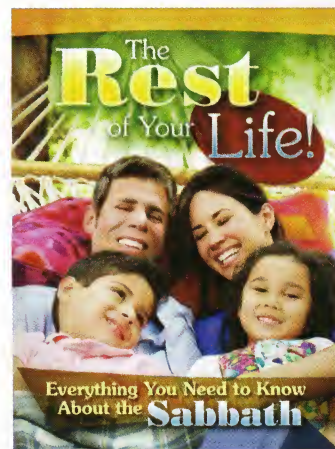
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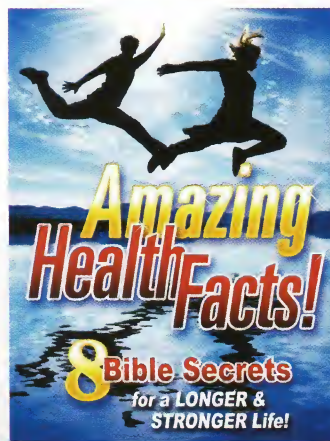
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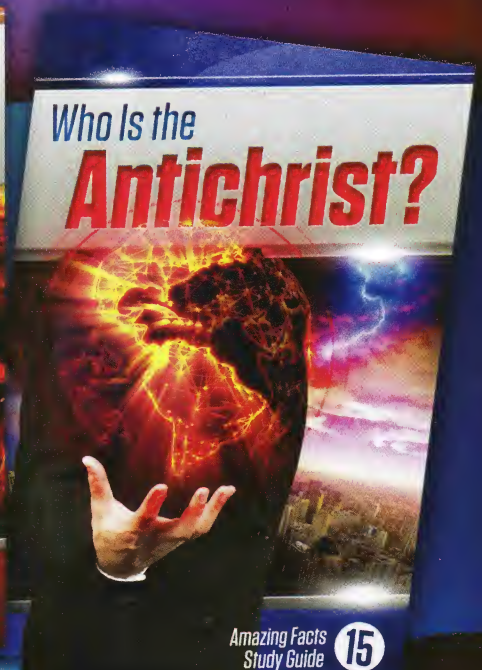
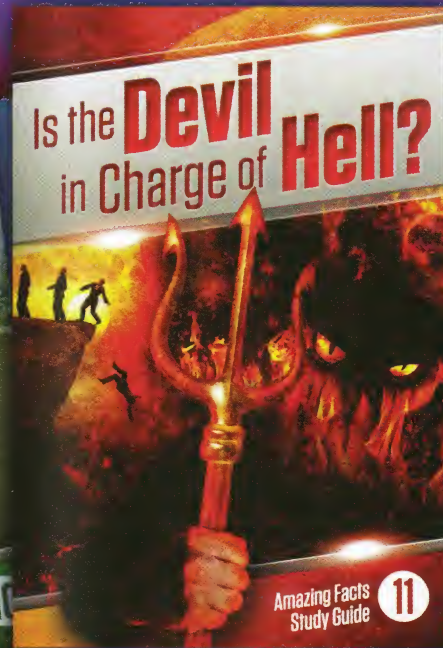
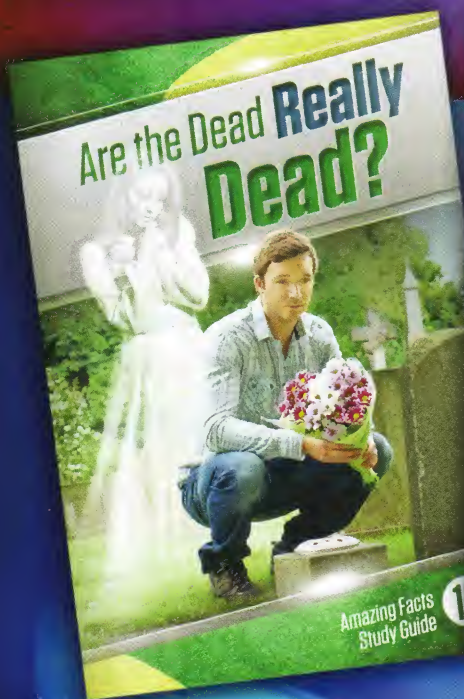
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